

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Yosoto Egami, 71, former tree grafter for the county extension service

"When they [coffee farmers] lease [from Captain Cook Coffee Company], they have to sign a contract that 'I promise to give all the crop to Captain Cook.' So, in other words, you are tied down with the company. You cannot sell to outsiders. So, all the coffee you harvest should go to Captain Cook."

Yosoto Egami, the first-born son of coffee farmers, was born on July 15, 1909, in Captain Cook, Kona. His parents, Torano and Kyutaro Egami, came from Fukuoka-ken, Japan.

Yosoto attended Konawaena School and Chūō Nippongo Gakkō until the ninth grade. In 1922, the family moved to Kainaliu where they leased land and farmed coffee independently. Yosoto helped on the farm and participated in 4-H activities. He worked as water boy in the sugarcane fields, did hō hana, worked part-time at Weeks Garage, and for a couple of summers, found employment at a Honolulu pineapple cannery. Although Yosoto dreamed of working in Honolulu and returning to school, he was needed at home. He helped to support the family in whatever way possible.

In 1934, Yosoto married Sakae Omori of Kealahou. They had five children.

From about 1937, Yosoto worked as a nurseryman grafting macadamia nuts at the University of Hawaii experimental station in Kona. He and his family continued farming coffee and engaged in macadamia nut production.

Through the years, Yosoto has been an active member of many organizations and has shared his knowledge of grafting and plant propagation with the Kona community. During his leisure, he enjoys fishing and collecting plants.

Tape No. 9-18-1-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yosoto Egami (YE)

November 18, 1980

Onouli, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Faye Komagata (FK)

FK: This is an interview with Mr. Yosoto Egami of Kingsley or Onouli, South Kona. Today is November 18, 1980.

Mr. Egami, can you tell me when you were born and where you were born?

YE: I was born in July 15, 1909, at Kealakekua.

FK: What part of Kealakekua was that?

YE: Above Marumoto Store, formerly. [Area presently called Captain Cook.]

FK: How many children were there in your family?

YE: Four children. Two boys, two girls.

FK: Which were you?

YE: I'm the oldest. And two girls in the middle, and the last one is a boy. So, four in the family. Four children.

FK: Can you tell me about your parents? Like, did they come together from Japan?

YE: No. Looks like my dad--I don't remember the exact year, but must be late 1800s or early 1900s--he came along with his friend from Fukuoka, Yame-gun. Mama came--I cannot remember what year she came--she came from same Fukuoka prefecture, but from Mizuma-gun. They [she and her husband] both went to Kauai. And then, later, from Kauai, it seems to me that she had moved to Kona. Then, she lost her husband. Then, she married to my dad, Egami.

FK: Do you know about when your parents got settled in Kona?

YE: Well, I were born in 1909. I found out I have an older brother, and a sister died somewhere around (1907 or) 1908, I think. So,

they must have got together around, maybe, 1905.

FK: Can you tell me about your father? You mentioned that he told you the story about how he landed in Laupahoehoe.

YE: After he left Honolulu, he came in at Laupahoehoe. It was sort of rough. The weather was so bad. I think the boat wasn't able to go close to that wharf--pier. So, what they have done is that, from the land, they had the winch. These people, all was thrown into a net. I mean, they (spread out the net), stand on the net, and they pull up the four corners of this net, and they were hoist up with this winch. He was just about to land on to the shore, big wave then just covered the whole net up, and they were all soaked wet. He said he never had that kind of experience. So he says that will keep him in a good memory for long--lifetime.

FK: You mentioned his first impression of staying in the camp, also.

YE: And then, I was told he was (transported by) wagon (to camp). He noticed the house was all whitewash. They were assigned to a large room. The first night he slept, around midnight, he said he started to feel itchy around his knee, and arms, and neck. Everybody started to move, so they put the light on. But the light was, he said, candle. They found out a tiny bug. He says that was Pākē mushi. We call that "bedbug." Was full of bedbugs between the (floor) cracks. So, the whole night, he said, he wasn't able to sleep. And the following morning, he found out all around his knees, and arms, and neck, and face were swollen.

FK: Did he talk about his work at all?

YE: His work, he said, he first went to a That place seems to be a rainy area. He didn't experience that kind of weather [before], and he's not accustomed to that type of work. He told me that he's been working at least ten hours a day. The luna or whatever--the foremans--come from the back, and they used to whip them if they don't move fast enough. They were driven like (animals). He was saying that one time the luna have stated that, "The mules are more valuable than any of you guys," because the mules used to be quite expensive. Oh, they just handle these people just like dogs.

And after you get sick, and you have to. . . . I think they had dispensary. Sort of dispensarylike. They have a doctor. If the doctor doesn't give you a permit to stay home, somebody come around check. If they found out anybody staying back in the house, they used to just drag 'em out. If he don't go back to work, they used to whip him.

FK: Did he mention why he came to Kona?

YE: Well, while he was working there, he used to hear lots about Kona. It's a place independent, peaceful. Everybody were looking forward

to move to Kona. I don't know how he arrive here. By horses or I don't know how, but after his term expires, he said he came to Kona. Well, for a while, I think, he must have worked for somebody. Then he find the area and started to cultivate and put in coffee. For side income, he says he raised taro and cabbages.

FK: So, when you were born, your parents were already doing what you just mentioned?

YE: I slightly remember the taro patch. This Chinese fella used to come with the donkey to pick up this taro from Kailua. He comes with four or five donkeys.

FK: Then your father was selling the taro?

YE: Yeah, selling the taro to this Chinese. The sad part is that, see, everybody wants to make money, so everybody started to plant taro. They want to get some source of income. (They thought) that was the best. But they overflood. The Chinese could buy certain amount. So, later, he said, they have a difficult time. They have to pull out the taro and throw it away from the field, because no market. I don't know, he was saying somewhere around one bag was about 50 cents. One bag taro, 50 cents or a dollar, I think.

FK: Where was the farm at this time?

YE: The farm that my dad had was, I think, just about mile from the main highway, above the former Marumoto Store. Mr. Marumoto had a store. And later, he had this theater he built, called Kona Theater.

FK: So, this is in Captain Cook?

YE: This is in Captain Cook area. Way up in the sticks.

FK: Do you know how many acres your father was farming, or approximately?

YE: When I remembered, I think, he had little over five acres. Originally, I was told, they all bachelors. So, two or three people get together, and they work--sort of, as partners. Later, they divided into---they take their own share. In the beginning, I was told, they worked together.

FK: Do you know who he worked with?

YE: I think one was Mr. Shigetomi, because he is from the same prefecture. I don't know how they found out, but one of his co-partners was Mr. Shigetomi, I was told.

FK: Did your father have to clear the land, or was anything there before?

YE: Was in guava. All in guava. But those days, I was told that guava wasn't thick like these bushes in Kona area now. They said the trees were scattered here and there. And a few 'ōhi'a. So, wasn't too difficult to clear the land, he says.

FK: Your father was in farming, but was he doing this in Japan, too?

YE: They have a little farm in Japan.

FK: Did he raise anything besides taro for sale?

YE: I think that's about the only thing, taro. Later, I think, when they found out about the transportation (to Honolulu). . . . The boat used to come into Kona once a month, I think. They were saying that they started to raise araimo, so-called satoimo. They used to ship to Honolulu.

FK: Was he also in coffee?

YE: Yeah. This taro is planted in between the coffee (in clear, new area). The main aim is to raise the coffee. But at the same time, they want to get some fast income, so they planted.

FK: What else did your family grow or raise?

YE: The only thing I know is few vegetable for home use.

FK: You were describing the vegetables, I think, one time.

YE: I remember, those days, if you have two or three clumps of cucumbers, boy, when you harvest you could get almost bagful. Oh, it's a huge size, if you don't harvest early. Even [green] onions, grows up to about---depends on variety, maybe, but I knew that some onions grows up almost two to three foot in height.

FK: You also mentioned that daikon and . . .

YE: Yeah, daikon. If you don't harvest early enough, daikon comes up to about three inches in diameter. (Three) inches, (four) inches. I remember, those days, they have this one daikon called shogoin. Oh, it's a good size. Almost six (to eight) inches in diameter.

FK: Did you have to help?

YE: Oh, yeah, we used to help in the farm. Pulling up weeds. Especially when they harvest taro. We used to take the roots out. We didn't wash it; we didn't have too much water. Water was limited. So, we used to rub and clean up the dirt (with dried grass).

FK: How did you mean, "Water was limited"?

YE: Oh, we had small tank. We had only rainwater. So, when the drought,

oh, we have to ration the water. Water was really valuable in those days.

FK: What kind of a house did you live in?

YE: I don't remember too well, one end was--I know definitely, I remember--had stone wall. Was made of stone. And the roof is over. When I started school, I know we had two-story building.

FK: Who built that?

YE: I think neighbors get together and built the house.

FK: Do you remember or can you describe the area that you lived in up there?

YE: The terrain is not too bad for Kona. Had all Japanese neighbors. They all own the average of five to six acres lot. Whenever they need help, such things like fertilizing their field or enlarge their house, they all used to get together and work. I remember when they fertilize the field, the neighbors used to come even with the extra clothes. And after fertilizing is done, they take their bath, and they stayed up to midnight. At the same time, they eat supper together, have tea during the night, and play. Well, they talk stories. I remember they used to love play sakura. Hana-fuda, they call. And some played that shōgi. I remember that they were playing that.

FK: Was there singing like that, too?

YE: I know one fella who loves liquor, and he always likes to sing. Sometimes they used to get together and sing. But unfortunately, maybe, dad wasn't that type of a fella. He (and neighbor friends didn't) like alcohol, so. . . .

FK: Most of the people. . . .

YE: Most of the people was not. But I know one fella in that group really loves to sing.

FK: Then this was one way of a social gathering?

YE: Yes. That was one of the social gatherings. The one thing I remember, they took me to a shibai. The day the shibai is performed we have to hike down from the mountain, that narrow road. They used to bring musubi, sushi. While the shibai is going on, those who love liquor, they enjoy drinks with their group. I wonder, I don't know if they were allowed to drink or not, but I remember. So, those days, we allowed yet, I think. They were drinking with their group. They have certain group get together.

FK: Oh, in the theater?

YE: In the theater. On the ground, the bag is put over (the dirt floor). They sit on the bag.

FK: Not on a chair?

YE: Not chair. No, no, no. No chairs. The reason I distinctly remember is that when it started to rain (heavy), everyone started to move, and I was wondering why they moved. Soon I found out. Rained so hard, the water started to come into the (theater)--not from the roof, but mainly from the side, (because of the dirt floor).

Of course, they had the platform where the stage was built. They have that roofed over, but when it rained so hard, the water used to (flow into where people were sitting). So they have to stand up and move. Otherwise, they get all soak wet.

FK: When you said "shibai," then, it was in Japanese?

YE: Japanese shibai. Local people--it seems to me--used to get together. Somebody who had the talent probably show some old (samurai) scene.

FK: Did you understand what was going on?

YE: I enjoy it. People yell and . . .

(Laughter)

YE: . . . make noise. And I enjoy eating. Certain people who have jūbako [picnic box], they'll bring food in it. That was one of their amusement, those days. No places to go. To go down to Napoopoo Bay--beach is quite a distance from where we used to live.

FK: Did the shibai come around very often?

YE: No, no. Probably once in a year.

FK: How many people attended?

YE: Oh, that theater was quite full. All packed. I know one year or two, the local people get together, and they practice shibai, and they did it. I remember that distinctly.

FK: This is when you were young?

YE: I was still young. I must have been going school, because one of my classmates--one of the younger ones joined the shibai as one of the main cast.

FK: Did people go down as families or did just adults go?

YE: Oh, their family. Usually, this kind of occasion, the family goes. They look forward to going down. Going over, they all goes on

their own. But it's still daylight. Oh, they goes early, before sundown. But coming back, it's pitch dark. So, they all carried lanterns. We just come up back the trail. Those who have young ones, they have to carry it on the back. Those who have a big family, one on the back, and one on the front. The young ones who be able to walk just followed the parents.

FK: You said some people went down with donkeys?

YE: Some people. But most, I remember, those who have small children, they put the young children on the donkey. But you know these children, at that age, lot goes to sleep, so the parents rides on and put one in the back and one in the front. So, three of them ride on the donkey, and they come home. And the wife, usually, always followed. Walk in back (chuckles).

FK: Oh, the ladies didn't ride?

YE: No, no, no. You know how the ladies have one baby on the back and diaper bags. Well, usually, [the diaper bags], they put 'em on to the donkey. But they used to follow back of the husband. Was a primitive age.

FK: What kind of foods did your family eat?

YE: Well, most of the time, I remember, we always have tsukemono [pickled vegetables]. That's one thing. And I remember that tsukemono that we call kōkō [usually pickled radish]. Oh, the daikon used to grows like mad. Even cucumber. So, three meals, never miss. (We always had it.) We never miss tsukemono. Our parents used to buy ume [plum--here, pickled plum]. Ume by barrels. Comes in a good-size tub. So would rakkyō [scallions--here, pickled scallions]. Very seldom we had fishes. But sometimes, maybe once a week or so, the fish peddler used to bring the fishes on the donkey. The time he reach up our area, oh, the fishes is just about to get spoiled.

Meat is scarce, too. We have to go down to the markets to buy meat (where they butcher). So, usually, two or three family get together. They take chances, I think. They used to go down to the market, buy the meat in big chunk. Meat is meat. So, in those days, they don't know what's sirloin, or T-bone, or porterhouse. So, they just says they want so many pounds of meat. Anything without bone they thought was the best thing to buy. When they buy, they buy, maybe, ten (or twenty) pounds.

FK: Do you know how much any of it cost?

YE: That is after I moved to Kainaliu, (1922). I think was (10 to 15) cents a pound or two pound for quarter [25 cents].

FK: For meat?

YE: For meat. Two pound was 25 cents. I think if you pay 25 cents, you can get half of the cow liver. Nobody cares for 'em. They didn't know the value. Even fishes. I know the fish peddler used to come and sell. But those days already, they had automobile, so the fish peddler used to come with the automobile. They used to give a sign to let the people know. He used to blow this hokkigai. Make booo--that sounds. Then people know the fish car is coming, so they stand on the roadside (and wait. This is on the main highway.)

FK: This is after you moved to Kainaliu?

YE: This is after I moved to Kainaliu. But when I was in the farm up Captain Cook, the peddler used to come with the donkey.

FK: Gee, and just a few year's difference, then?

YE: Few year's difference, but that much difference, eh? So, where I used to live at Captain Cook, no car comes up that area. Only thing, we traveled with donkey and they have a wagon trail. That's right. The wagon used to come up and pick up the coffee. So, we had the wagon trail. (During coffee harvesting season, we had wagon pick up the coffee every day.)

FK: When you talked about coffee, your whole family worked in the coffee? Did you have to help?

YE: Oh, yes. (Coffee was the only source of income.) Even if you help the neighbors, that is share labor. You not going to get paid.

FK: What did you mean by "shared labor"?

YE: You help them harvest coffee or weeding. Then, when you through that farm, that fella come down to your farm (to help). They share their labors. They not going to hire.

FK: This is just among the family and neighbors?

YE: Just among the family and neighbors. Work together.

FK: Did you folks ever hire anybody?

YE: Well, I don't remember. Only maybe peak season, during coffee harvesting season, probably they used to hire. But when I was small, I don't remember that we're hiring people.

FK: How did your father do the coffee? Did he plant from seedling?

YE: It looks like he started from seeds. Coffee seeds.

FK: How would he have gotten those?

YE: I think he purchased the seeds from somebody, and then start the seedling. One good thing with coffee--when you plant from seed, doesn't change. As long as you get good variety. I remember they had two type of coffee. They both Arabica antipica. Arabican coffee. One is called Guatemalan and one is called Hawaiian. They soon found out Guatemalan type give more yield. So, whoever have planted the other type, so-called Hawaiian type, they cut down and tried to convert into Guatemalan type. Farmers learn the hard way.

FK: You mentioned that people around you owned the land. Did you mean by lease or did they own it outright?

YE: That's all lease. This sort of a sublease. Captain Cook have leased the whole area from Greenwell--Arthur Greenwell. That section that I lived, all the land--practically all--belongs to Arthur Greenwell (and Captain Cook Company leased it). Of course, Captain Cook had their own land, but that's only one strip. And the Captain Cook have subleased (Greenwell land) to individuals.

When they lease, they have to sign a contract that "I promise to give all the crop to Captain Cook." So, in other words, you are tied down with the company. You cannot sell to outsiders. All the coffee you harvest should go to Captain Cook.

FK: "Should go" (chuckles).

YE: (During depression some farmers try to smuggle coffee somewhere else to get cash.) Captain Cook used to advance merchandise (and fertilizer) on the acre basis. I was quite old that time already. I think they were lending, I don't know, up to so many dollars an acre. So, if you have five acres, they allot about (five) dollars to an acre. Then [\$25] of merchandise will be advanced for the month. You go beyond the (five) dollars [per acre], you not going to get.

FK: (Twenty-five) dollars?

YE: Not over the (\$25). Then, that (\$25) will be paid by produce, that is, coffee. They also advance fertilizer. And they advance your rental, too. They charge you rental, so many dollars an acre. In other words, you lease from that company with the contract of so many dollars an acre per year. And they will advance so many dollars per acre on merchandise, and fertilizer.

FK: Do you think your father ever got any cash return at the end of the year? How was the . . .

YE: Those days, the coffee was cheap. It sort of fluctuates. Certain time, maybe, it goes up and come down again. But unfortunate thing I remember. . . . The one reason why my daddy folks have (decided to) move to Kainaliu was this: that for, I think, three years, due to the weather or due to the fertilizer practice, he didn't have much crop. The coffee tree grows, but the flower don't appears.

Maybe one thing was weather. But what I think, mainly, it's due to the fertilizer practice, too. See, they only apply one kind of fertilizer. Maybe weather had lots to do, too. But production have come less and less. So, no income. Finally, they (decided to give) up that farm because of no income. They knew that if they move to Kainaliu area, they could be employed at the [sugar] plantation. They had plantation that time. Was still going on.

FK: In Kona?

YE: In Kona. So, they moved to the Kainaliu area. So, quite a number of the people from our area have moved. Oh, I think all my neighbors.

FK: All?

YE: I won't say all, but practically half of our neighbors have moved to Kainaliu. And they were employed at the plantation.

FK: Who were some of the people?

YE: One of them is Mr. Nozaki. They were the early ones. Mr. Otsuka, Mr. Ohata. And who else now? We had quite a number, anyway. They had moved. They have secured their jobs at plantation. Dad knows, being a neighbor, so, somehow, he check up with these people if they could get a job.

For the sake of the children, (it would be) closer to school, too, if we moved to Kainaliu. Where I used to live, I have to hike down (about one mile) to the main highway. And from that main highway to school is almost three miles. So, I think, we used to travel at least three and a half miles every day to school. We used to walk to school and back. For children's sake, too, they thought, "We better move from that area."

FK: Going back to the coffee, though, did your father grind his own coffee?

YE: No, no, no, no. When we were at Captain Cook, the contract says that as soon as we harvest, we have to ship by cherry. That's the contract.

FK: So, how often was your pickup?

YE: In the peak season, the truck used to come practically every day. When the crop get slack, probably the truck comes out maybe twice a week. At the most, maybe three times a week. Every other day or so.

FK: When you say "truck" . . .

YE: Wagon. I'm sorry, I take back. Wagon. That's the only source of transportation. It's by horses and wagon.

FK: Who picked it up? The Captain . . .

YE: Yeah, the Captain Cook has their own truck. I mean, not the truck, but the wagon of their own. Comes with the wagon.

FK: Do you know about what elevation you were at?

YE: I would say about close to 2,000 feet.

FK: How did it affect your crop or any of the things you were growing?

YE: Mainly due to, I think, rain. Like coffee, definitely, they need certain periods of drought. Like, now, you notice, this is November. You notice that started to get dry. So, you have two or three months of real drought. Then the rain comes in. Then it's okay. You have good crop. But you have continuous rain right through the year. The coffee just keep on grow, grow, grow.

FK: The trees, you mean?

YE: Yeah, the trees. That year, you have a poor crop.

FK: So, when you were living in Captain Cook, from what age did you go to school?

YE: I think I was eight years old. Because the one thing is, we're too far from school and I had the poor health when I was young.

FK: Where was the school?

YE: The public school was formerly where Mr. [Francis] Cushingham lives now, where the public library is located. Right opposite to the First Hawaiian Bank. And Japanese school was at Hongwanji.

FK: You said you walked every day?

YE: Oh, yeah.

FK: From the beginning, how did you go?

YE: When I first entered, my neighbor was Mr. Kakizoe. Mr. Kakizoe had several children older than I am. They used to take me to school. Another neighbor was Mr. Murakami. His name was Tadao. To make it clear who he was, he's the Lt. Governor's grandparent. Jean King has an uncle by name of Robert. He's much older than I am. He used to help take me to school. Take me to school and back. So, we were depending on my neighbors.

FK: And what time did you leave to go to school?

YE: Oh, just about daybreak, we leave. Especially during Christmas, winter months, I still remember how chilly it was.

FK: Did you have to do any chores before you went to school?

YE: No, no. We soon get up, we just change our clothes, (have a fast breakfast), and we just headed for school. That is when I used to live at Captain Cook.

FK: How about when it rained?

YE: Mama used to make the raincoats for us--kappa. And we also had umbrella. So, we used to carry this raincoat and umbrella (every day to) go to school. That umbrella and the raincoat was nuisance to us. So, (chuckles) we used to hide that umbrella and the kappa. As soon as we reach the main highway, we used to hide in the bush. (Chuckles) If the weather turns out--school close, then it rains--just out of luck. We have to get soak wet.

(Laughter)

YE: After we reach to the destination where we hid that raincoat, then we'll wear the raincoat and go home. But many time, we forget about the raincoat. If the parents don't keep track with us, we misplace that raincoat. Being a kid, we forgot where we hid that raincoat. And when we found out, the raincoat is deteriorated. All rot.

FK: What kind of. . . .

YE: She used to sew with the cloth, and she put some kind of oil. Boiled linseed oil. That doesn't leak through it. And keeps you warm, too. But it smell awful when it's new.

FK: At school, what kind of subjects were taught?

YE: Practically about the same thing. But I distinctly remember, when I was in baby class, Miss [Alice] Hoapili was my first teacher. We learned arithmetic--two plus two, one plus one. And two times two, one times three. Times table, too.

FK: I notice you mentioned "baby class." Is that considered first grade or kindergarten?

YE: I think that could be kindergarten today, I'd say, baby class. Then goes to first, I think. I don't remember too well. But I remember, I started school from eight. But when I was in third year or fourth year, fella is about my age. I was on the same class. So, I don't remember how did I got into that class.

FK: What subjects did you like the most?

YE: I used to like arithmetic.

FK: And what did you like the least?

YE: I didn't like story writing.

FK: Was there any reason for that?

YE: I don't know, just too lazy, maybe. I know that when we were in the chūgakkō, our principal was so particular that he used to give us sakubun every week.

FK: Oh, this is Japanese school?

YE: Japanese school. And we have to keep diary. That's the worst thing. I hate to do it. So, every time. . . . I accumulate about one week. I used to write the whole one-week diary in half an hour. So, I started with, "Asa hayaku okite kara. . . . Nani shimashita? Benkyō shimashita. Sore-kara, kara, kara." [After I got up early in the morning, what did I do? I did my studies. From then, and on, and on, and on.] Everything, sore-kara, sore-kara. So, I used to finish one week diary in half an hour, so you could just see what kind of sentence I made.

FK: When did you start Japanese school?

YE: Japanese school, when I enrolled at the public school. At the same time. Maybe the same day practically. I know mama took me to Japanese school, Hongwanji. So, public school must have been the following day. So, about the same time.

FK: How many students were at the Japanese school?

YE: I don't quite recall. We must have had about (20 children) . . .

FK: What kind of classes did you have?

YE: . . . we would have about 10 or 15 in Japanese school, I think.

FK: Oh, in the class?

YE: In the class. Those days, although not in that first receiving grade, but when I was about second grade, we had the shūji, too. We had fude and sumi. We used to have.

FK: Did you enjoy that?

YE: I used to like it.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

FK: [Were there] community events or celebrations or holidays, anything

like that, that they might have done together as a family?

YE: Only one thing I remember, while we attend school from Captain Cook, especially in Japanese school, Tenchōsetsu was a big event. The emperor's birthday. We used to wear new, clean clothes. We go to school. We had the Tenchō-setsu ceremony, too. The principal read the chokugo [Imperial message]. You know, this "shin o omou waga kōso." This was done in the temple, with the curtain in the front. The principal wears the (white gloves), and he read that. We sang "Kimigayo," and, oh, it was a big day. And usually, that kind of time, I think, certain year, they had sumō, too.

FK: Who attended this . . .

YE: Usually the people around that neighborhood. Parents mostly all Japanese.

FK: Oh, wasn't only for children, then?

YE: No, not only for children. When they have sumō, it's usually for the whole community. Due to the transportation, it's locally, nearby. You cannot expect people from Holualoa to attend.

FK: Do you celebrate any religious holidays or regular holidays?

YE: Another thing I remember is, I think, due to my parents, we have this Hongwanji. They used to have the five celebrations were going on, I think. But mainly it's one in January, one in March, and Gotan-e in May, and had Ō-Bon. I distinctly remember. Usually, that kind of time, I think, they have set the date on the weekend. I used to walk to Hongwanji. That was a big treat for us.

FK: You and your family walked to Hongwanji?

YE: We have to walk over and walk back (chuckles).

FK: What kind of affair was this? Did it last all day?

YE: No, I think about half a day. And certain occasion, they have in the evening. One they have in the evening, once or twice, I still remember, we slept at the church. Because the distance is too far.

FK: How was that done, though?

YE: They have a service. Then, from that time on, I remember this zenzai [sweet, thickened red-bean-meal soup and rice cake]. This is in January. They call Hōonkō [memorial service for Shinran]. This is for Shinran Shōnin. I remember, after the service is done, get so chilly and cold, so they used to serve us zenzai. Then, they had futon. I know, definitely, they had futon, so I lie down and sleep. The old people used to gather and just talking stories. Religion stories or I don't remember what, but they chattering.

FK: When you mentioned futon, I just remembered. In your own home, how did you folks sleep?

YE: Just futon.

FK: Did you have beds?

YE: No, no, no, no, no. Floor. Our house wasn't big enough to put the bed, anyway. We slept in one room.

FK: How about your kitchen?

YE: Dirt floor. Fireplace, no stove. Fireplace, we use this dry wood picked up from the field. Coffee branches and guava sticks. That's our main source of cooking.

FK: Who picked up the sticks and the wood?

YE: Oh, the parents picked up the wood. When they have spare time, they used to cut and they store up in the stockpile. So, in the rainy season, they don't have to worry about looking around for dry wood.

FK: How about the bath?

YE: We had furo. I remember, we had furo, but no wall on the side. Was open place. So, if you go late in the evening, oh, you could feel the chill--the cold wind. I remember that furo. I wish I have took the picture. I know no wall on the side.

FK: How about your hot water then?

YE: Hot water, we had that. We had the basin, so we pour out from the furo, and wash.

FK: Did you burn wood for your . . .

YE: Furo. That's right. All wood. We used to burn wood.

FK: And how were the toilet facilities?

YE: Outside.

FK: When did you move to Kainaliu?

YE: I'm not too sure again, but it was 1922, I think.

FK: You already mentioned about why you moved. Where did you move to in Kainaliu?

YE: Going from Kealakekua, just before you get to the Kona Medical. Just below that. It was an Ackerman property.

FK: Oh, on ma kai side?

YE: Ma kai side. On the left, if you face toward Kailua. That's only about 300 foot from the main highway. We have bought this lease from Mr. Kikuchi.

FK: About how many acres?

YE: This is about three acres. The other day, after I have met you and we were talking, I was looking for old papers. I came across this old deed when we made the transaction. I don't know how in the world that I kept that. So, I have all deeds from that time on to this property, and the property I bought on Keei. I bought a property in Keei, too.

FK: What were the terms of the lease, then?

YE: The term of the lease was--maximum, I think--they always been giving ten years at a time. When dad bought that place, I don't know how many years were left, but after the lease expires--the term terminate--they renewed the lease. If I'm not mistaken, I think we have renewed the lease for ten years four or five times. So, we been there, that area, from 1922 on to 1964, I think. And still then, in 1964 when I moved back here, I still had about four or five years more lease. So during that period, I have rent the house to Mr. Koyanagi until the lease expires.

FK: How much was the lease?

YE: First when we moved in was about \$15 or \$20 an acre. Three acres, so \$60 annually, payable once a year. And we pay the r.p. [real property] tax. The second term, we renewed the lease, I think was about the same. When come down to fourth, they have raise up to \$25. And the last, I remember, they have raise up to \$50 an acre.

FK: How did your family all move over (to Kainaliu)?

YE: I don't quite remember. We had wagons or something to move all our belongings, I think.

FK: Were you already paid up with Captain Cook when you moved?

YE: That property there? No, we just turned the lease back to Captain Cook. So, we don't owe them nothing.

FK: This area in Kainaliu, what did your family do after this?

YE: The land was in rugged shape. It was bad shape. Because this party was planning to move to Honolulu, so they didn't take care of the fields. It was in pretty bad shape. They started to clear the land and clean. Surprise me, but this person must have loved onions. Oh, the whole area was planted with onions. Short onions. Green

onions. Oh, boy, never seen that many onions they planted. Many places the coffee trees were missing, so dad started to fill up all the areas with coffee.

And as soon as he's catch up with his job, he got a job at [sugar] plantation as a laborer. He do all sort of work. During the harvesting time, he goes help harvest cane. After the harvesting, they go to weed or what they call hō hana. So, when summertime comes, myself and Dr. Yamagata, he and I was a classmate. We both went to join these ladies and wen weed this cane. We were paid about 50 cents one day, I think. We started early in the morning. In the evening, pau hana was about 2:30 or 3 o'clock, we were coming home.

FK: What areas did you work?

YE: Right below my place. I imagine that's about 800 to 1,000 foot elevation, so it was quite hot during the day. I couldn't forget that heat when we went. So, we suffered.

FK: You started around 1923 or so, then?

YE: No, it could be later than that. I was young then, I remember.

FK: About how old were you?

YE: I must have been around 14 already. Must be, because to handle that type of hoe, you can't be too young. Good-sized hoe, that. I remember the hoe was quite big.

FK: So, that would be around 1923, '24?

YE: Around that time. Around that year.

FK: Did you have any breaks while you were working?

YE: Yes. We had mid-morning lunch, I think. They get the breaks around 8 or 9 o'clock. You could have a short break. I think mainly for those who wasn't able to get good decent breakfast, I think. So, they all go to their lunch can and eat half of their lunch. I remember, I was young, then. Myself and Dr. Yamagata, one time, ate all the lunch that hour. So, when lunchtime come, we didn't have anything to eat. So, that was the normal practice that time.

FK: How about the afternoon?

YE: Afternoon, we didn't have any. We have to hang onto the water, whatever you have left during the lunch hour. If you drank all, you just out of luck.

FK: Who paid you for your work?

YE: I think the individual cane growers. We were hired by the individual, not by plantation. It seems to me the individual have 30 acres, 15 acres, or 10 acres of cane of their own. So these people paid us.

FK: Do you remember any of those people?

YE: I think the lot I went was owned by Mr. Yamagata. That's why this Dr. Yamagata and I were able to get a job that young.

FK: What were the ages of the other people there?

YE: They're all ladies. Adults. See, we were among the ladies. So, he and I was the only male. We're working between these two, all elderly ladies.

FK: Were you paid in cash?

YE: It's all in cash, but I'd say, about month later. Not that cash . . .

FK: Not every day?

YE: Not every day. But those days, even I work outside and get little earning, get a job, all the money goes to the parents. Today, you notice, if my children secure or get any kind of job and they get paid, they get paid. They won't give to the parents. (The employer) pay to whoever have worked. And whoever get the pay, why, they just open, and they use the money the way they feel like. But my days, even they were paid to me, I used to bring the money back to the parents. The parents give me whatever the kozukai--what we call spending money. That's the difference, I could see.

FK: Did your job include any benefits at all?

YE: Not that I knows of. I don't think so. No benefits. Those days, nobody care to sue somebody.

FK: Was there any competition for your job?

YE: No, not that I knows of.

FK: You worked during the summer at the cane field. What days did you work?

YE: In the summer, I worked six days a week, I think. From Monday to Saturday.

FK: And what did you do on Sunday?

YE: Well, I don't quite remember, but I must have been doing something Sunday. I don't remember what I really did.

FK: How did you feel about your work--that cane field work?

YE: If I can find good excuse, I want to get away from going. But we were just dragged. And we felt our obligation that I should go. So, I didn't feel that I should try to run away. I thought was sort of routine job for me to do it, so.

FK: What were the younger ones in your family doing?

YE: They stayed home, and they take care the coffee farm.

FK: How long did you work in the cane field summertime?

YE: Oh, not too long. Not right through the summer. I think, must have been, at the most, probably would be about one full month, maybe. Not right through.

FK: Then, what were you doing the rest of the summer?

YE: Stayed back and work in our own coffee field.

FK: Was that because of coffee season?

YE: No, it's just before the coffee comes in. Usually, the coffee started to get ripe early July, so just to get ready.

FK: What kind of work did that involve, though? Taking care of coffee?

YE: Mainly weeding. (Chuckles) That's about the only thing. Certain years, that coffee was quite ripe during month of August, so it kept us busy harvesting coffee. Sometimes, I remember, one year, July was quite ripe. July and August. Then school started from September.

FK: How many summers did you work in the cane field?

YE: Not too long. Maybe, at the most, two summers, I think. Two years, I think. Because the plantation went out of business.

FK: Nineteen twenty-six?

YE: I'd say, 1924 or '26. Somewhere around there. And that's when I already getting little bold and go Honolulu, work at the cannery. (Chuckles)

FK: You also mentioned that after working at the cane field, during the school year, you worked at the garage?

YE: Part-time.

FK: What garage? Where was this?

YE: This is the Weeks Garage, where Mr. Sawada is selling fishes today. And Joe Iha has his radio repair shop and store just before Kainaliu

from this way.

FK: What kind of work was that?

YE: Mainly to repair cars. So, what my main job was to pump gas. And when they dismantle the engine, to wash the grease out of the block engine. All kinds of minor things.

FK: Did you have any experience before you went there?

YE: No, no. I didn't have any experience. I simply liked that type of jobs. I was not the only one. We had several Japanese boys who were working together.

FK: How did you get the job, then?

YE: Somehow, I was good friend with the Chinese electrician by name Clement Ching. He recommend me. Every spare time that he has, he used to do electrical wiring. He used to take me around. Those days, we didn't have any electricity. Those who have electricity of their own, they have their own power. They buy one separate machine to operate the electricity. Electricity came in Kona, it's long after that.

FK: Did your family have?

YE: No, we didn't have. But I was, part-time, doing that type of job. . . . We used to process our own coffee with gasoline engine. So, I used to operate my own power. I get old generator.

FK: Just for your coffee then?

YE: No, just for my kitchen light. I get about six or seven storage battery. During the day, I charge these battery, and the night, I can use the electricity (for light).

FK: When was this?

YE: Oh, this must be around '26, '27, I'd say.

FK: You were still quite young at the time?

YE: I was young, yet. I must have been about seventh or eighth grade, I think.

FK: How much were you getting when you worked for Mr. Weeks?

YE: I think about \$15 a month. Because they claimed that I still learning.

FK: How were the others being paid, then?

- YE: Gee, I don't know how much they get paid, but myself and the other Japanese boy by the name Sugimoto. I don't know how much he was getting paid, but I get little more than he did. And the others, I think, they be paid by monthly salary. Sort of salary. I think they were getting about \$30 or \$35 a month.
- FK: How long were you at the garage?
- YE: How many years? Well, not full year. I didn't go work full year, but during the summer and. . . . I would say, the total number days, probably it would be less than hundred days, maybe.
- FK: That you worked in a year?
- YE: Yeah, in a year. And then, later, after I got back from Honolulu, I worked about one year. Almost one year.
- FK: Again?
- YE: Again.
- FK: How was business for Mr. Weeks by that time with cars?
- YE: Wasn't too good, I suppose. Hardly any cars. Not much cars to be repaired. Well, he had enough business, maybe, but not too many cars those days. Even gasoline, I don't know how many gallons we were pumping, but not too many.
- FK: In one day?
- YE: One day.
- FK: Do you remember how much the gasoline was?
- YE: I used to pump gas and collect, but. . . . If I'm not mistaken, maybe about 15 or 20 cents a gallon. Somewhere around 15 to 25-- between that figure, I think. A gallon.
- FK: How did people pay?
- YE: Oh, they used to pay mostly by cash. A few people, they charged it, like Dr. Dixon and Ackerman family, they used to charge.
- FK: You said that after the cane--sugar company closed, you went to Honolulu to work during the summers?
- YE: That's right.
- FK: From about when was this?
- YE: Usually, I go in early part of June and come back around (September).

FK: This is about 1927?

YE: [Nineteen] twenty-six and seven, I'd say. And then, come back around September.

FK: You were telling me about how you went about getting your job.

YE: Oh, yeah. I think, the first year when I tried to get a job, pineapple wasn't quite ripe. They take only limited numbers. I went to get a job (several times). Of course, I had a recommendation from one of our faculty from Konawaena, because he used to be a foreman at Hawaiian Pine[apple Company]. So, he gave me a recommendation. And I went in to get a job about four or five times, every morning . . .

FK: How about school, though?

YE: Oh, I ran away. See, we couldn't be taking chances, wait 'till the school close because, then, you'd have more people be getting jobs over there. So, just about week before the school close, we used to take off (to Honolulu). Every morning, we go to the Hawaiian Pine, and we stand in line. Oh, I'd say, about 200 of them stand in line. If today, I think, this man is a security guard, with badges on the chest and get club, but he form us on the single file. Every department, if they want to pick up five men or they want to pick up ten men, they come around. They just go down the aisle, and this man pick up the man he like. I don't know whether he looking for handsome guy or what, but usually, physical work, they look for the husky fellas. And other than physical work, whatever they want, if too small, you get slim chance of getting job. I was smallest in the group. So, I was just about the last guy to be picked. I went about, I know, five times.

Well, if I couldn't get a job, I was thinking of going back Kona. But I had the uncle living in Honolulu, so I didn't have to worry about my lodging. My spending money getting less. So, I was thinking, if I couldn't get a job, I have to go home. I was just roaming around, try to locate my former teacher from Konawaena where I get the recommendation. But he wasn't still employed because the job was scarce, yet. Not full season. The security guard see me roaming around, so he caught me and he says what I'm doing. I said, "Looking for a job." He asked me what kind of job I look for. I didn't know. Job is job to me. Any kind of job. So, he asked me what department? I don't know about those kind of terms--trimming department, machine department, or maintenance department. So, I said, "As long as I get job, I am satisfied." He asked me where I came from. Say, "I came from Kona."

Then he question me. He asked me if, "You know by the name of this person?" But that was John T. Ferreira.

"Yes, that's my shop teacher. He the one gave me this recommendation." I showed to him the recommendation.

He said, "Yeah, this guy, I know him well. You come with me." So, I followed him. Then, he took me to a seamer department. That is where they cover the pineapple. After they pack the pineapple in cans, then put 'em into the cooker. And they cooked in there, I don't know, maybe an hour, then comes out almost boiling hot with the syrup inside. Then, they come to the seamer machine, and they seal the can, the cover. Then he took me over there. Then, he told to this foreman there.

He says, "Oh, you take this man. This very good man." Oh, he was saying all kind of things. And here, this fella sizing me up. He asked me if I be able to handle this kind of job.

I said, "Sure, I could."

He said, "You start right away." So, that's where I got the job. And start with, I told you ten cents, but I was thinking. I think I got 15 cents because [it was the] machine department. Fifteen cents an hour. The pineapple was just starting that cannery machines, so we only had about three or four dollars a week. So, four hours you work, it's fifteen cents. You know how much you get paid, only 60 cents. And then, I have to go home. Then, I start off from 15 cents, and I end up with, I think, 25 or 28 cents an hour the same year.

FK: Oh, how come?

YE: Well, I just happen to know one guy was. . . . I had a friend. My old classmate from Kona--that Captain Cook Store--by name Shimizu. He was my classmate. This fella, his father had good income from the store, so he went to McKinley High School. From McKinley High School, he went to commercial school. Then he had lots of friends over there in the cannery. And through his recommendation and through introduction, oh, I get big break. So, I met his friend working at the same department. I came to watchman, then next watchman, and each time, I get promotion.

FK: Was that unusual?

YE: Oh, that's unusual. Bozo Wakabayashi, the baseball player from Wahiawa, was working with me. Owen Konishi was working with me. And then, just a couple weeks--that's the Hongwanji riji-chō [board chairman] long time--Yoshikami. He works with me. I works with these people, so I know them well. Because these people, already, they were attending normal high school--normal or college.

FK: They were working at the cannery?

YE: Cannery, cannery. And I started to know these people. That's why I had good break.

FK: How did you like the work, though?

YE: I used to love it.

FK: How did you feel about coming back to Kona?

YE: Only thing is that it's seasonal crop--pineapple--so no choice, but you have to do the common field work, or do something, so I thought I'd come back and go back school. I should have stayed there. But I came back because my parents always writing letters telling me to come back. And my father was really sick, then. He was weak, so I came back. I hung on, helped farming in Kona. That's why I came back.

FK: You would have preferred to stay in Honolulu?

YE: Oh, I like to stay, because I didn't have to worry about getting job. Those days, the job was scarce.

FK: And you were doing well at the cannery?

YE: Oh, I was doing well at that. . . . Especially season time. I think, I was getting 25 cents and had more overtime, so I was making good.

FK: When you came back to Kona, by then, what grade were you in?

YE: I think I must have been in freshman. Then, September, the coffee start to come in full blast. I was just about to enroll in school, father got sick, so I got to stay back and help the coffee. So, I stayed back that whole (year).

FK: School year?

YE: Not full school year. I stayed back, and I was working the coffee. Then, I was thinking of going back school, but I thought, "I make some extra money, and go back Honolulu, and go to Honolulu school." That was my biggest mistake. Overambition. That year, I think, we stayed back. That's when I left school, and I start to work at the Weeks Garage. I think that was the whole story.

FK: With the intention of going to Honolulu later?

YE: Later. But I end up in Kona.

FK: After Weeks Garage, did you go back to school?

YE: Yeah, one year, I think, I went back to school. When I worked Weeks Garage, I must have been eighth grade. So, when I went back was my freshman year. Back school.

FK: And then, how long did you go?

YE: Not too long. I left school before school closed. Around March or

April, I left school. I was forced to leave because daddy was really sick.

FK: You said, after that, you spent time on the farm? What did that involve, then?

YE: In the farm, those days, where I was born in Captain Cook, that area, the coffee season used to come around in early spring. So, I thought that would be a good chance, because early spring, we have coffee, and where I'm living, it comes in autumn. So, we bought a lease again at Captain Cook. That must have been about June, 1928. We bought six acres of lease land again. I used to commute. The land that I bought--six-acre lease--had two homes. So, one home when I go on there, I stayed. And the other home, I had my coffee pickers stay on the other home.

FK: Oh, you hired?

YE: Hired. Whenever I can find part-time job, I used to work part-time job. That year, coffee was good. It went up to about almost to five dollars on cherry. Five cents a pound. And consider it's a boom for coffee. The year that I bought, the coffee price started to decline, decline. End of the year went down to three dollars a bag. The following year, it started to decline, decline, decline. Each time, no fluctuate, it just comes down, down, down to dollar a bag. That's about 1935, '36, I think. So, one cents a pound. Dollar a bag is one cents a pound. And you have to pay that coffee pickers. Oh, they were paid only about 50 cents to 60 cents a bag. But still, we giving 60 percent out. So, take-home pay is only about 40 percent. So, I gave up already that farm.

FK: That Captain Cook one?

YE: I think I gave up 1937 or '38. The reason I gave up is that I were hired at experiment station. We only get--when I start experiment station--about two dollar a day.

FK: You had that coffee land in Captain Cook. You had mentioned Baron Goto, before.

YE: Yeah, he came (to Kona) about 1928, I think, '27, '28. He was the first county [agricultural] agent. Then, he organized the 4-H group of young people, ladies and men. We was one of the first 4-H members, but we were sort of more to the elderly side, not ordinary school kids. So, that's why they put the word "junior." That's why, the first picture that you showed me, I think "JFD" is Junior Farmer-something. So, Baron had put Junior Farmers-something, I think. So, we was the first junior members.

FK: What did you do?

YE: Oh, we used to raise cabbages. The first thing is, the coffee

prices downfall, so we raise cabbage and try to convert into diversifying. But trouble is, we didn't raise enough to ship out to Honolulu. And the transportation was really poor, too, those days. Locally, we raised the cabbage all right. We able to raise, but nobody buys. Nobody had money to buy. Because everybody raise their own. So, we raised the cabbage, especially Chinese cabbage. We borrowed the neighbor's donkey, and put about four bags on the donkey, and come down to the street. Sat along the roadside. Nobody buys. At the end, I think, only one time, we sold about dollar or dollar and a half. And we have to pay for the donkey.

FK: Who did you sell it to?

YE: Mrs. [Osame] Manago felt so pitiful, so she bought out the whole thing for dollar or something. She bought everything, and she gave us dollar. So, we gave everything.

FK: How far were you going?

YE: Oh, we came as far as (Kealakekua Post Office) and peddle around, but . . .

FK: This Konawaena area?

YE: Yeah, up to Konawaena area and throughout the Keei area. Nobody buys. [They] say, "If you folks want, I give you vegetables." Everybody had no money.

FK: But that was your first effort at trying to sell vegetables?

YE: So, first, the desire was to buy the land, make some money, then I go back to school. But, no. I end up with where I am now.

FK: When you were living in this Kainaliu area, then you were also growing some of your vegetables there?

YE: Oh, for home use. I know, one or two years, my father had raised-- while I was still attending school--we raised araimo [Japanese taro].

FK: Did you sell that?

YE: We market that.

FK: To whom?

YE: To one of the wholesalers in Honolulu. But I know, definitely, one crop, we shipped it, but we lost everything.

FK: How is that?

YE: They claimed that they wasn't able to market. So, we have to stand loss for the freight, and we lost our crop.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 9-22-2-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yosoto Egami (YE)

December 8, 1980

Onouli, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Faye Komagata (FK)

FK: This is an interview with Yosoto Egami at his home in Onouli, Kona. Today's date is December 8, 1980.

Mr. Egami, in 1922, you moved to Kainaliu. But before then, we were talking about some of the car owners in Captain Cook. Can you mention a few of them that you remember?

YE: The Dr. Ross, and the Judge Thompson, district court judge. And few store owners, like Mr. Marumoto, and maybe Mr. Fujino, too. I don't quite remember. But later on, practically all the stores bought a truck. And for taxi, Mr. Murayama, and Mr. Saito, and Mr. Okimoto were running taxis.

FK: When we left off last time, we were talking about your work experiences. But before then, could you describe the Kainaliu area of 1920s as you remember--as far as what people were doing for a living and what kind of buildings there were.

YE: In Kainaliu, I think, get what we call now, Kainaliu town. Just Oshima's and Okamura's. That was the main strip in Kona. Right next to Oshima's dry goods store, where they have the Standard Bakery, that used to be a theater (and restaurant), run by Okazawa. That used to be a theater. Almost opposite to that have the tall store building. It's almost a two-story building. That was the plantation store. I remember, I think Mr. Bunsaku Matsuoka were running the plantation store. And where is the Ben Franklin and the Kamitaki's hardware store, around that area used to be all plantation camp and stables. Stable was located behind. All the plantation animals were brought back there.

The front, I remember that the early part, the only stores--this Mr. Oshima had a small store. And Kimura Store, formerly owned by, I think, was Mr. Ikeda. That used to be Mr. Ikeda's branch store. His main store were located right where Billy's service station [i.e., Bill's Auto Service] is located now. That's the new building he had--now, Leslie has a fish market. That area used to belong to

Mr. Ikeda. Right opposite to that had the county garage.

FK: Oh, in Kainaliu?

YE: No, I'm talking about this . . .

FK: Keopuka?

YE: Keopuka. [Also in Kainaliu.] This Mr. Ikeda owns that store where Mr. Hisashi Kimura's running now. He had one man hired by the name called--Mr. Kaku were running the store. Where they have Kurohara's dry goods store and that other stores on the Ka'u side-- I don't know who owns it now--but they had one Chinese store own by Ahuna. That's about the only stores I can remember. And Mr. Okamura had a small store. I think he were running hotel that time. The blacksmith was located, I think, just about where Mr. Okamura's parking area. That used to have a small blacksmith called. . . . I don't know, Sakumoto or Okamoto or something. Right between Okamura and Kimura, one carpenter man were living. And Mr. Shiroyama was living right between Nozaki. Where Nozaki live, that used to belong to Mr. Shiroyama were living and making tōfu. Those about the only stores. Later, Mr. Nakamoto and Mr. Masuda put up a store just about [where] the Ben Franklin store is now, had store there. They were repairing and selling jewelry goods. Mr. Nakamoto came in later.

FK: Which Nakamoto is this? Sadonoshin?

YE: Sadonoshin. He was selling agent for Singer sewing machine. Mr. Masuda, I think--oh, he died--but he used to run the jewelry store. But that's later, long after '25.

FK: Did you go into town very often, though?

YE: In those days? Not too often. But that's about the main strip.

FK: For that area?

YE: Yeah. And every time, on some special occasion, like Fourth of July, I remember, they all gathered there. Donkey was very popular those days. Not every farmer, but practically [all] farmers owns donkey for transportation. So, they used to have donkey races.

(Laughter)

YE: That was a main event.

FK: Did you have any parades?

YE: I distinctly remember, I don't know how old I was, but this was early part of '20s. I think they had a Fourth of July parade. Mr. Tanimoto---no, not Tanimoto. Who's that coffee farmer?

FK: Tanima?

YE: Tanima. I think they pull up in a parade. I think they used a plantation truck. In those days, the truck--only few cars--I think the rear tire was solid, not with the air in it. Mr. Tanimoto . . .

FK: Tanima.

YE: . . . Tanima, I think, if I'm not mistaken, he put [on] a uniform of George Washington. I still remember that.

FK: I guess during the cane season, then, [did it] seem to be a busy place?

YE: During the harvesting season, that place was a busy place. Blacksmith. The plantation had their own blacksmith. Mr. Chai was the blacksmith.

FK: How about the plantation trucks and the people going to work and all . . .

YE: Only the truck, I remember, had only one big truck. The rest is all animals--mules and horses. And the horses, hardly any horses. They used the horse mainly for the lunas.

FK: Who were the lunas?

YE: Well, luna, I don't quite remember. The head luna was Mr. Endo. Big luna. The other lunas was mostly Portuguese. And we had one timekeeper--they call "timekeeper"--was a Japanese fella by name--I think, was Sasaki. This is long ago, so I quite forgot, but luna was a Portuguese fella. And later, Mr. Tatsuno came in and took over that. I was told he came from Hakalau. He was a big luna. That's just before the plantation folds up.

FK: How about Mr. Konno?

YE: Mr. Konno, he's the head man. He runs the mill down Holualoa. I'm not too familiar with Mr. Konno because he lives at (Waiaha, where Mr. Harold Nakamoto lives now).

FK: Did you associate with a lot of the plantation people?

YE: Not exactly "associate," but during the summertimes, whenever job available, part-times, I used to be a water boy in the field. I used to help them serve water--carry water to the plantation workers.

FK: How much were you paid for that?

YE: I think they paid me about 75 cents a day or something.

FK: What about going to school? Did all those plantation children go to school, also, with you?

YE: A lot of the children, they used to attend school. But during summertime, whoever be able to work, they would work in the field. Especially harvesting season. Driving mules and hauling chains. They used to bundle up the cane with the chain, and they used to slide [the cane] on the cable down to the. . . . Oh, they have a railroad track somewhere around--below Kainaliu. From just below Konawaena School, that's quite a ways down, toward the ocean, they had the railroad. They used to haul the cane on the train to Holualoa. KD [Kona Development Company] Mill. They call KD Mill. That's where they crush the cane. But until then, they have a station built. They used to slide the cane--bundle up the cane with a chain--and then they slide through the cable, down to the train track.

FK: Did you ever ride the train?

YE: No, I. . . .

(Laughter)

FK: You were into coffee farming here at the other times of the year. Could you explain about the different kinds of machinery that you had, and maybe what you used in the past, and how it changed?

YE: I definitely remember, when I moved to Kainaliu back in early 1920s, we harvest the coffee and we pulp the coffee. That house that we bought didn't have any drying platform. So, we had a small---I don't know, somehow daddy got one machine, that is, a pulper. After we harvest, we used to pulp the coffee with hand. Manpower. We had to grind with the big flywheel assembled on two sides of the pulper. One fella . . .

FK: You turn by . . .

YE: One turn the flywheel. Usually two. On the both sides of that pulper, they have the big flywheel. One fella hold one handle, and the other, other side. And turn the thing with hand. I think we did that about three years, I think, I remember.

FK: How about washing the coffee?

YE: Then, we make a small fermentation box and let it stand there for overnight. And we wash with water. Of course, water was very scarce. During coffee season, normally, get dry. So, we just washed the coffee in the bucket or tub.

FK: By hand?

YE: Oh, yeah, all by hand. We drain the water and dry it out on a mushiro--they call mushiro bag.

FK: Oh, on the ground or on . . .

YE: On the ground. Then, later on, we built small drying platform behind the house. But no roof over, so what we do is, we dry the coffee on that--oh, it's a small fella. I would say, probably the size was about 16 by about 18 [feet]. Small fella. And we dry out on that platform. In the evening or in the rainy time, what we do is gather all of the coffee, yoseru [move aside] to one corner, and then put roof over. See, can't afford to buy enough. We don't have money to buy the roof over--[to] cover the whole area.

Yeah, we gathered all. And then, once it get little dry, then we put all the rest that we dried on mushiro. Later on, of course, we enlarge and put roof over the drying platform--several years later, maybe. Or couple years later. Most of the coffee were dried during the peak season. We used to dry it on mushiro. I think we used to have about---our dad used to have about 30 bags of mushiro. What we do is, wash coffee early in the morning before sunrise. Before we go to school, we used to dry this mushiro out. Those days, of course, already, we had this gasoline engine. We bought one gasoline engine. We convert this hand pulper into a Make a small drum and we put the drive belt on it, and we used to grind with this pulper with the . . .

FK: Gasoline?

YE: Gasoline engine. One cylinder.

FK: Other than that, did you change again?

YE: No, we used the same principle, but only, later on, just before the war [World War II], I think, people getting wiser. They put in elevator and they try to eliminate that. Use elevator, instead of we have to carry up the coffee on the high platform. Then, after we pulp that, the coffee comes down, way on the bottom. Then, we have to carry up the coffee, wash it, and put it [on] the platform. So they used a mechanized, what we call, elevator.

FK: What kind of system was that, though--the elevator?

YE: To carry the coffee up. So we just . . .

FK: Was that pulley or was that electric or . . .

YE: Later on, it was converted into electric, after we have electricity.

FK: Some people mentioned that they used to wash coffee with their feet.

YE: Yeah (chuckles). . . . That's right. The fermentation box is about--I would say the normal size, that time, for the smallest coffee growers--I think about four foot by six foot or four by eight or something. Those who have a big area, they had the larger size box. They put water in it, and they goes into the fermentation

box early in the morning. And they step the coffee with the foot. Of course, they use hoe, too. You can just shake it up, the coffee.

FK: This washing will take off all the slimy . . .

YE: Yeah. Washing is just to take this slimy things out from the beans.

FK: Did you know who made coffee machinery?

YE: That's the thing I'd like to find out, but I don't know actually who was the first one. I'm not too sure. Within our kumi, by name Mr. Masui, I think, he was sort of bachelor. I think he must have lost his wife. He had one daughter, though. But he was very ingenious fella. He's an alien. Later, he moved to Japan. He went back to Japan. But he was very ingenious. He used to repair machine, and coffee pulper. When an engine get in trouble, he used to help us start the engine and all that. He was very ingenious. Other than Mr. Masui, Dentist Nakamaru's daddy used to repair and fabricate coffee pulper. And another fella, by name Ichishita. That Ichishita, his son is running a laundry business now. They were very ingenious. They fabricate coffee pulper.

FK: A what?

YE: Coffee pulper. They assemble all that to make the coffee pulper. In the beginning, they used to utilize this 'ōhia wood, or 'inia wood, or hau wood, or something of that nature. But later on, they get wise, and they ask this ironworks in Hilo to make the mold. They used to make that coffee pulper--the main plate, you know, where they pulp the coffee? But in the beginning, they used to make with wood.

FK: You know Mr. Yamano?

YE: Yeah, Yamano probably came later. Because he lives in Honaunau, so I don't know too much about him.

Another fella was very ingenious was Mr. Ashihara. Yeah.

FK: Oh, right here?

YE: Yeah, right here. He used to fabricate lots of this coffee pulper. Ashihara. Mr. Tokunaga became---he was apprentice for Mr. Ashihara, so he put up his own shop later.

FK: In 1928, you bought that lease in Captain Cook. Can you explain your basic operation back here? How often did you go to Captain Cook, and how long did you stay in Kainaliu when you were working . . .

YE: This property at Captain Cook, the main reason why we took over was, the family of my dad's friend were forced to move to Japan

because of some family reason. He wanted my dad to take over the field and make transactions for him. Usually, they used to sell this leasehold. If I'm not mistaken, he might have [had] about seven more years lease through Captain Cook Coffee Company. And the coffee price at that time was really a boon. It was really good. So, he were asking for reasonable price, but dad didn't want to take a chance of trying. He's not a broker, not a businessman (chuckles) of that nature, so he says, in that case, he rather take over the whole lease. So, in other words, we have bought the lease through him.

One reason was that was his friend and he was eager to go back. Another reason from our standpoint is, coffee season at that higher elevation. . . . Where we bought that property was around, I would say, almost a 2,000 foot elevation. The coffee season comes in the spring month. So, the place where we used to live, coffee comes around autumn--around September up to December. But the new property at Captain Cook, the main crop comes in around March, April, May. That's the peak season. By that, we could have operated two sides. The season comes in the different months. That's the main reason we thought was good. At that time, if I'm not mistaken, the cherry coffee was around four (to five) dollars a bag. That means four, (five) cents a pound in cherry.

FK: Later on, you said, the prices went down, and eventually, you had to sell the property?

YE: Now, after we bought the property, I thought I could make some money and I could go back to school. That was, I think, early 1928. The same year, around July, I know the coffee started to fluctuate. The price came down to \$3.50 [a bag]. The same year by December, I distinctly remembers, came down to \$3.00. We were hoping the following year the price will rise. But the following year, the price started to decline again. It start to decline down to two dollars and a half [\$2.50]. And end of the following year, I think the price came down to two dollars and a half [\$2.50]. Oh, it came down fast. And came down, down. Every year, it came down, down, down to, oh, about one cents a pound [one dollar a bag]. That was around nineteen thirty . . .

FK: One . . .

YE: One cents.

FK: For cherry?

YE: For cherry. I think this was about nineteen thirty. . . . I think about '36, '37, was about one cents a pound.

FK: While you were farming that Captain Cook property, though, who did you sell your coffee to over there?

YE: The lease was from Captain Cook Coffee Company, so the lease says that we have to give to the company. So, we were forced to sell the coffee to Captain Cook.

FK: And your Kainaliu property was . . .

YE: Oh, that's sort of independent. We can sell our coffee wherever we wanted to. We didn't have no string attached. But the property on Captain Cook, the property we bought, the string was---I mean, goes through Captain Cook.

FK: According to lot of the research we've done, many people left Kona during that period after the prices went down. What kept you in Kona?

YE: I don't know. Maybe my parents didn't want to move, too. We were not making extra good, but we had farm in two sides, different season, too. I don't know. One thing, I don't know why we didn't move, but moving from Kona, we're taking our chances, too. You don't know what kind of place [you're going to]. And another thing, I'm not fit to work in the plantation because I didn't care to work [as] laborers in the plantation. By that time, dad wasn't too aged, but for health reason, he wasn't too healthy. So, that's one reason why we didn't care to move from Kona.

FK: Oh, your family?

YE: Yeah. That's what kept me from going--during the late '20s or early '20s--during the coffee season, I were out from school almost two, three months.

FK: Can you talk a little about your job as a census taker? What was involved in that?

YE: Well, I don't exactly remember what year.

FK: You said, around 1928, maybe.

YE: Yeah, maybe. I'm not too sure what year was it, but by that time, we already have, I think. . . . The Captain Cook growers. I mean, these growers wasn't too happy about the contract between the farmer and the Captain Cook Coffee Company, because we were forced to sell to the company. Our lease says that we have to sell it to them. The return is, when compared to other independent growers, they wasn't too much satisfied with the quotation. However, the contract was this: the company will take all the crop, but in the meantime, they will advance merchandise--not in cash, but in merchandise--up to three dollars worth per acre. So, if you have five acres, you will have \$15 worth you entitled to borrow from Captain Cook. They will advance you. But in return, you have to sell all your crop to the Captain Cook. They would quote the price. So, the farmers gathered and then they organized. All the kumi have their

separate kumiai, but all the Captain Cook tenants, in other words, get together and they organize the hui called Captain Cook Dōmei-kai. So, the whole group get together, and every time we get some representatives from the group. We had about four or five to represent the group and goes to the Captain Cook office to make some kind of deal. "Some kind of deal" means that ask them a fair price. They [farmers] were not satisfied with not only price but the weight. They weigh their coffee at home before they ship, and when they got the return from the company, oh, tremendous difference. Because the loss in between is so great.

To answer your question, when they have the census, usually, the key man was Mr. Marumoto on that area. And he picks up the men. So, he asked each group to assemble at one section to take the census. And whoever is missing from that, due to, maybe, illness or they don't attend, we have to go chase after. So, we have asked this group--Dōmei-kai or kumiai--to announce the census together at one section.

FK: This census was for the Japanese government, you said?

YE: Yeah, Japanese. Jinkō-chōsa, they call, eh? Censuship, they call, of the alien. The other thing what they wants to know is how many family, and age.

FK: Oh, how many in the family?

YE: How many in the family and their ages. They just want a head count, I think, mainly they want.

FK: Did you have to ask them about what kind of work they're doing, too?

YE: No, no. It's just a head count. Because we know all of them [were] coffee growers.

FK: You said, at one time, you had to check on the Koreans, too?

YE: Yeah. Being a Japanese government, so they have asked to check the Koreans, too. But didn't respond too well at our section. By that time, lots of these Japanese coffee farmers have moved from Kona to different district, so lots of vacant area. These Koreans used to come in. By that time, we had quite a . . .

FK: In the '20s?

YE: No, early '30s, I think. This was early '30-something. From the ('30s) to ('40s). Quite a number of Korean families were living.

FK: What other jobs did you have after working for Bill Weeks' garage and your farm?

YE: After we had bought the piece of property in Captain Cook around '34, I think, the politicians like Julian Yates, every year, they used to give the voters about a minimum of ten day's job at the roadside--cutting grasses. County job. Around '33, '34, was quite a depression. Julian used to get quite a bit of money. He was the supervisor.

FK: Who was?

YE: Julian Yates. He was a supervisor. He used to get quite a numbers of money when [President Franklin] Roosevelt came in, during his administration. Like NRA [National Recovery Administration], CWA [Civil Works Administration], FERA [Federal Emergency Relief Act], CC[C] [Civilian Conservation Corps]. All the money, whatever available he could grab hold, he used to bring into Kona and give a job to the Kona people. The major big job during the depression year was that road from Napoopoo. . . . They started from Honaunau Park, around that Honaunau Bay, up to Napoopoo. That main straight road, that was our big relief money. That was our PWA [Public Works Administration], I think. And that's when I got a job over there for a few months.

FK: What did you do?

YE: Oh, all kind of physical work. Work on the road for couple weeks. And later, I was errand boy. That is, gather all the used drill and bring 'em up to the blacksmith, and do all odd jobs. After that, I changed the job into a. . . . See, everybody wants to get a job. So, the fair way of doing, I think, was to give the job [to] who really need it. To do that, we needed somebody to take a census--family census. So, I got a job to take the censuship job. I worked for a while, anyway. That job was rotten, so I (chuckles) just gave up.

FK: What did you have to do in that job?

YE: Go to each employee or each family and find out the head of the family, how many acres they have, how many chickens they have, and how many children they have. Put down all the dependents. By that, we can . . .

FK: Income, too?

YE: Income and everything. Then, we can go back to the office; we tabulate the figures. Then, we could find out who really needs the job because those who have more dependents should have it. See, everybody looking for a job because . . .

FK: Because of the depression?

YE: Because of depression. You couldn't get jobs elsewhere. So, even you raise vegetable or you do anything [and] you want to sells

that, nobody buy because no money. So, I work on that type of job for a while.

FK: You mentioned that you found that there were discrepancies in what people were reporting in order to get the job?

YE: That's right. Especially gaijin [outsiders; here, non-Japanese], no? Oh, they smart. They real aggressive. Because Nihonjin [Japanese] is relatively shōjiki [honest, straightforward]. By doing that, we found out [a] couple--that bachelor (chuckles), he has about 7 to 15 dependents. We found out that legally, he wasn't married and was taking care. . . . The same family reported to us. Two, three fella applied. They are dependents.

FK: What kind of pay were you getting while you were doing a government job?

YE: I think, those days, on the PWA, the roadwork, minimum pay was 40 cents or 45 cents an hour. Oh, that was relatively good. Before that, working at county, I was told, they were only paid two dollars a day. Eight-hour work. When this road project came in, WPA or PWA or whatever it was, I think, 40 or 45 cents an hour. And then, after that, PWA came into FERA, and they were still paying 45 cents. But the thing was this: each person was allowed 16 hours a week or something like that. They limited to 16 hours the most, I think. They had two shifts, though. Morning shift and afternoon shift. Let's see now. They start from 6 to 11. They probably works about four hours a day. Three to four hours. And they go four days, then they get 12 hours. Somewhere around 12 to 16 hours a . . .

FK: A week?

YE: A week.

FK: Who did the hiring?

YE: Normally, that Julian had the voice, those days. Of course, it's different administration, but he used to run the whole show.

FK: Oh, when you mentioned "supervisor," you meant that in Kona, we didn't have a mayor . . .

YE: Just like a councilman, today. [Like] Bill Kawahara.

FK: In 1934, you were married. Can you tell me about how you met your wife or what arrangements were made and things like that?

YE: Well, I don't know . . .

FK: You can mention her name, too.

(Laughter)

YE: I don't know, they forced me to get married. I was thinking of moving to Honolulu. I know, dad--my parents, already, know that. Because I had a friend in Honolulu. They were asking me why don't I move to Honolulu. But of course, Honolulu was still depression, too. But I knew definitely I was able to get a job. But my parents didn't want me to move to Honolulu because we still have a land in Captain Cook and we had one in Kainaliu. They were forcing me. I don't know, I wasn't too keen of getting married. But I don't know, somehow (chuckles) I consented. So I got married. I have a neighbor, good friend, in Captain Cook, and my friend and my neighbors, they force me, force me, and finally, convince me to get married. So, I got married late December, 1934.

FK: Where is your wife from?

YE: Captain Cook also.

FK: Did you know her from before?

YE: No, she's from Napoopoo area. I said Captain Cook, but she lives near Machado's store. I knew the family because same prefecture from my dad folks. Way back, 1926, when my mom went and make her first trip to Japan, her [YE's wife's] father went Japan with my mama. And second trip, too, I think, the same time, they went Japan, too. I knew the family.

FK: What is your wife's name, then?

YE: Sakae.

FK: Maiden name?

YE: Omori.

FK: What kind of wedding did you have. Can you described what happened?

YE: Those days. . . . Of course, I left all up to this, what you call da kine middleman or nakōdo. So, I left all up to these people. So, these people goes, talk over with my parents. What they have, they call yuinō [betrothal gifts]. They fix up all the thing with the Hongwanji reverend. They have arranged all that, so when they brought the yuinō, see, I have to accompany that. I know, definitely, I remember. It's old Japanese. . . .

FK: Custom, yeah?

YE: It's a custom. So, when they brought that thing over, I went over.

FK: To her house?

YE: (Chuckles) I remember that. Sounds awkward, but I just follow

whatever they says.

FK: How did you dress?

YE: Oh, just normal. Not tie on, but just ordinary clothes.

FK: Where were you married?

YE: Hongwanji.

FK: In those days, was it a big kind of wedding or. . . . What was it like?

YE: At the Hongwanji, it wasn't--but we still had the reception. We make jointly, I think.

FK: Oh, the two families?

YE: Two families.

FK: Is it the same as they do today?

YE: Practically about the same thing. Except the difference is that, I remember--we don't see that kind of ceremony anymore, real Japanese custom. Of course, we sat on the chairs, but before anything goes on, they have utai? (Pause) I think you not familiar, too.

(Laughter)

YE: They have the utai. They have to sing three, I don't know, some kind of songs. Some meaning to it, I think. That's the old tradition. After that finished, then they go to the first part of the ceremony. So, after that is about the same thing.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

FK: You mentioned at the reception, she had to change clothes?

YE: Oh, yeah. This was some job. That, just to show what you have or I don't know.

FK: (Laughs) You mean, in wafuku [Japanese clothes]?

YE: Yeah, furisode [long-sleeved kimono] or whatever. Hōmongi [a visiting-kimono] and that kind . . .

FK: And what did you do?

YE: I sit and wait.

FK: (Laughs) Then, you continued to live in Kainaliu?

YE: No. After I married, most of the time I stayed at Captain Cook.

FK: By that time, did you have a car?

YE: Yeah, I think I had one car.

FK: After you were married, did you have any other job or were you just farming?

YE: I got married late '34. So, '35 and '36. . . . Part-time, I used to go out and work.

FK: Where?

YE: For a while, I worked for Triple A [Agricultural Adjustment Administration] with rat control.

FK: What would that involve?

YE: The rodent control. Put poison on the. . . . Not for a while. Only for short while, you know. From North to South.

FK: Kona?

YE: Kona.

FK: What did you have to do, though?

YE: We have to poison the rat.

FK: Was that a private company?

YE: No, it's under government. That's all.

FK: And how were you paid for that?

YE: I don't quite remember, but \$50 or \$60 a month or something like that. For that time, everybody was happy about it. To get that kind of job, at least. Then, I don't know. Off and on, I used to do gardening jobs, that kind of jobs. Then, part-time, I were asked to work at the University. Part-time.

FK: Extension?

YE: No, experiment station. From that time on. Then, I came permanent employee from 1937 or '38.

FK: Oh, so before 1937, you were doing part-time work?

YE: Part-timer.

FK: How were you paid over there?

YE: Two dollar a day or something (chuckles).

FK: What did the work involve at the experiment station?

YE: Oh, all kinds. In general. Taking care of the nursery. When taking care of the nursery, that's mostly weeding, transplanting, and things of that nature.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

FK: When you became permanent at experiment station, how did that come about?

YE: Then I became sort of salary. I think, three months, I work for \$60 or \$75 dollars. Then, I was (tape garbled), see? I were on the borderline. By that time, I got rid of my property on Captain Cook. Because no sense of me travel that far. I wasn't making money with that farm anyway. Coffee, at that time, was only about dollar a bag [one cent a pound].

FK: That was for what? Parchment or cherry?

YE: In cherry. So, just about one cents a pound. Nobody cares to pay for the farm. But if you give away the lease, oh, lots of people take it. But if you want to convert into cash, nobody pays. So, this was, I think if I'm not mistaken, somewhere around August. Because if I keep that coffee [land], I have to go back and forth. Too much expenses, go back and forth. And another reason, daddy was so sick that we have moved from Captain Cook and we stayed together with. . . .

FK: Oh, back in Kainaliu?

YE: Back in Kainaliu. We sold that place. Oh, main thing is, I want to get rid, anyway (chuckles). So, I had about \$250 or little over \$200 in debt. That debt form of. . . . They advance our rental; they advance fertilzer.

FK: Oh, from where?

YE: Captain Cook Company. I had about little over \$200 of debt in Captain Cook. Just about before coffee season. I had a fella, Korean man, wants to buy the place. I sold it for \$25 in cash. But I wasn't able to get the cash. I sold the whole thing. He takes over the \$200 debt, and then he promised to pay me \$25. Cost me about \$25 to move my household goods back. I don't how much exactly I paid, but just enough to pay my transportation. So, he promised me to pay by--this was in August--so by December. From

August, September, October, November, December. He say he'll give me \$25. So, I made an arrangement with the company to hold me \$25 before December, anyway. So, I got the \$25 on December.

FK: And he took over your debt?

YE: Yeah. So, \$200, plus the cash, \$25. In other words, I sold for just like little over \$200.

FK: How many acres, now?

YE: That one had six acres, I think. Six acres.

FK: What was your job at the experiment station when you became permanent?

YE: Same routine job. I took care the nursery. That time, already, our major job was [to] propagate macadamia [nuts]. Grafting.

FK: How did you know about grafting? You were in coffee. (Laughs)

YE: Oh, no. While I was in Konawaena [School], we had first lesson way back about 1925. We were taught how to graft in Konawaena. So, we had the general principle of doing grafting. But we didn't know anything about how to graft or what's the best way of doing. . . . To get success in grafting macadamia. But we had general idea how to graft. The boss of the experiment station knew that I was doing that kind of job, so. . . . Like grafting mangoes, avocado, and peaches, citrus--like oranges, I were doing, but I . . .

FK: Oh, at the experiment station?

YE: No, he knew that I were doing at home, see? Part-time. So, when I went to experiment station, already, he. . . . Only thing is that major work was macadamia. I think when I went in, they had about, oh, they had quite a numbers of plants. I think they had over 5,000 plants.

FK: What kind of macadamia nuts?

YE: Oh, by that time already, University have selected quite a numbers. They had over 150 varieties selected already. They goes all around the state. Whatever they think is worth propagate for commercial. Of course, this macadamia is tested in University. They gave a number to each. See, maybe you may have ten trees. And we check your ten trees. Any trees among the ten--within the ten trees--we think worth propagating, we send 'em [sample of nuts] to University. And University gives you a number [to] tag on these trees. So, we had about 150 or 170. Around 1937 already, they had over 150, I think.

FK: Varieties?

YE: Yeah, it's going to be a variety. That's all over. That's from Kauai, and Maui, and Big Island. Mostly from Oahu, was.

FK: Were there differences in the plants that you could tell?

YE: Oh, different kind of foliage, different types of leaves, different types, different shapes. Only, those days, hard to tell, yet, because we wasn't too sure which is the best. Only thing, you see, from each variety, they send out the sample, and they grafted. But those days, we didn't know anything about grafting macadamia, so, I think, on the average, success of graft was only about 2 percent.

FK: What happened?

YE: From that time on, we started to get that theory, and we know what kind of portion, what kind of section wood is good, and . . .

FK: What happened to the trees? To the rest of the trees?

YE: We can always go back and regraft, so. We don't kill it.

FK: What do you mean by "success of 2 percent"?

YE: You know, when you graft, you expect to make it grow. But we make ten plants and maybe one or two plants takes. Eight and nine don't grow. So, that kind, you always go back and regraft again.

FK: How long do you have to wait for the nuts to come out for you to find out whether it's good?

YE: Oh, it takes about at least eight, ten years.

FK: So, this is the very early stage of the experiment?

YE: Yeah, that's right. Early stage.

FK: Who else was working with you at that time and who was your boss?

YE: [Robert] Pahau was the superintendent. The fellow employees was, I remember, that Torao Ikeda. That's from your area. He died. Susumu Sugai. Tadashi Monden. We had about four or five employees. Ito.

FK: In the nursery?

YE: Nursery and overall. Of course, not only nursery, but we had coffee, too. Coffee experiment, too. Taro, coffee, and all kinds--miscellaneous. But the major was macadamia (and coffee), where they were grafting macadamia.

FK: That you were doing?

YE: Yeah.

FK: Did you enjoy your work over there?

YE: I must have enjoyed, otherwise I wouldn't be sticking that long (chuckles).

FK: How long did you work, then?

YE: About 35 years.

FK: What were your hours?

YE: Oh, eight-hour day. I think the early part was, we were working even on Saturday. Half a day on Saturday. Later, of course, we work only five days a week. Eight hours. Forty hours a week.

FK: What was happening to your farm?

YE: Well, my wife, and my mama was still living, too. Not much work other than coffee season. Wasn't too much a problem after I got rid of this Captain Cook [land]. Of course, this property here I bought in 1945.

FK: During the '30s, how was your credit at the stores? Was it different from before?

YE: About the same thing, maybe. But, we was fortunate that somehow we managed. I didn't find too much of difficulty.

FK: What were some of the inexpensive food that people were eating?

YE: In those days, I think chicken probably would be the expensive thing. I think the meat, the early days, I remember, my wife always mention. She remembers when she goes out to the butcher shop, buys meat, she only buy about two or three pounds. Even stew, she says, she buy two or three pounds. If stew, she was saying that she distinctly remembers was about 15 cents a pound. That's the stew meat--the stew ribs, huh? Liver was about. . . . Oh, if you buy ten cents, give you a big chunk.

FK: What about the different kinds of foods--the dry fish?

YE: Fish was, maybe, about ten cents a pound, cheap time. Ten, 15 cents, 8 cents.

FK: You were mentioning iriko.

YE: Iriko and things [were]--early stage, I remember. . . . Of course, everything was--Kona--used to be the credit system. But later, the cash and carry business came in.

FK: About when was that?

YE: During the depression years, the early one have started, I think. Because I remember, Mr. Kishi came in and he started to open the cash and carry. Then, Fujino Store started to open cash and carry. [Paying by] cash and [paying by] credit was tremendous difference in price.

FK: How do you mean?

YE: The same one pound iriko, cash is so much; credit is so much, I think. I know I remember distinctly that--I don't know exactly what year, but my dad and my neighbor up Kainaliu--neighbors, I think three or four--get together and they used to buy direct from Honolulu.

FK: Buy what?

YE: Merchandise. Like groceries. For instance, like New Year, December month, knowing that they need definitely surume, konbu, wakame, kazunoko, and ebi, and kanten, azuki, and mochi rice. We don't use one bag mochi rice, but they buy one bulk and they used to divide among these people.

FK: Your neighbors?

YE: Yeah, neighbors. I don't know for how many years that thing continue, but later on, we were forced to give up, because the Honolulu wholesalers says they have complaint from Kona merchants that they going to boycott if they going to continue doing that.

FK: Oh, you weren't the only ones doing that, then?

YE: I don't know. Maybe some outsiders were probably doing, but they said they were having complaints so they have to discontinue giving it to other than. . . .

FK: Did you find it was a big savings for you folks, though, by doing that?

YE: Oh, yeah. Tremendous savings. Oh, yeah. You could see the difference.

FK: You would send the order to Honolulu and how would you get it?

YE: Oh, we would work through mail, and then [the merchandise] comes to Kailua. Mr. Yoshioka were running freight, so he used to haul for us. Comes in a big crate, yeah? Then, they goes on the roadside; they open the crate. Those days, we have to haul on donkey. So, we open the crate, and whatever we can transport with donkey. Come to the house, and the neighbors get together and they divide. They pay their shares.

FK: How did you feel that kind of time?

YE: I thought was a good thing because you save quite a bit and that merchandise is fresh, eh? For instance, like surume and tara--bakalaw. Oh, boy, if you pay two dollars worth of tara, boy, you get big bulk. One piece--big one--weigh about four or five pounds. Cost you only about 25 or 30 cents apiece. Kanten, eh? That time, I used to help dad to prorate that. See, you get so many dozens of kanten, costs so much. We didn't have calculator, so. Of course, my dad comes with da kine soroban [abacus]. Go pora-pora-pora so fast, but I wasn't good in, so I started to learn only addition. But I wasn't too good on soroban, so I have to use paper and pencil. I used to help check that figures. I think, kanten, runs about three cents apiece. Dry one. You know what I mean, kanten, the dry, long, eh? Get red and white. I think about three cents apiece.

Iriko can was, one time. . . . Only thing I don't remember how many ounce that--16 ounce or 12 ounces. Because we always assuming pound--one 16 ounces. Used to be 16 ounces, usually, when they give. But, later, the merchant gets wiser. You know, when they came into cash and carry business? So, now, 16 ounces, when they cut down to 14 ounces, then they can cut down the price, eh? And lots of people, they don't check whether the package is 16 ounces or what. They assuming it's one pound. See, today, when they go to the store, first thing they notice is that ounce. They check that, but in those days, one package is one package.

FK: So, you used to buy in pounds?

YE: In pounds, yeah. They used to package into one-pound packages, usually. When they package them, they used to put in one pound. Usually, one pound. But the merchant get wiser, too. Because when they start to compete in retail business, they demand to the wholesalers, "Put in my package, instead of one 16 ounce, put 14 ounces." So, when he can sell to the customer, put that on the table. One guy is selling for, let's say, 15 cents, he could sell it for maybe 13 cents. Two cents cheaper, then he could sell out more, eh? But the farmers don't know those kind of thing too well. Even azuki. There used to be one-pound packages. Then came down to 14, 12, 10, 8 (chuckles). So, I used to help daddy in that--how many going be.

Like, mochi rice, one bag is. . . . I think, rice, the cheapest was, I remember, \$4-something [for] 100 pounds. They say "100 pounds," but usually no more. You get about 98 or 97. Sometimes, if you unlucky, you get only about 97 pounds, net. Supposed to be 100 pound, though. When they pack, maybe 100 pound, but that much moisture take away or I don't know. Very seldom you exceed 100 pound.

So, later, my dad was saying that doing this kind of job not too profitable because he have to write the mail, write the letter, he

have to put postage, he have to divide, and he gotta go o-cha [i.e., serve tea, refreshments]--Japanese style, you know. Then, they want to get a minimum price, eh? Whoever divides say, "Oh, that thing costs so many cents," or "One piece, so much." They don't consider the expenses. Of course, those days, I don't think they had taxes imposed on that. You got to put freight. On the boat and on land.

FK: Can you talk about the tanomoshi [mutual financing association] a little bit?

YE: The tanomoshi, I don't know too much. But early '30s and around the '20s, I remember tanomoshi. My dad and all the neighborhood from Kainaliu, they had tanomoshi all over the district. Ten dollar a month, \$15, \$25. The biggest I remember is about \$25.

FK: A month?

YE: A month. That's the biggest. But not too many. But when come down to real depression time, the \$25 tanomoshi was, I would say, don't function too well, because hard to get that kind of money. I remember, early '20s, tanomoshi--they bid the tanomoshi. Maybe ten-dollar tanomoshi, if you had 20 members, that means \$200--totally \$200. That goes monthly, so if you want the \$200 badly, you have to bid the \$200.

FK: How do you do . . .

YE: The bid is, let's say, for every. . . . You see, you put 10 cents, [or] 15 cent, [or] 20 cents. You put your tag in. You going to bid. You have to pay 10-cents share to each . . .

FK: Of the other members?

YE: Members. So, in other words, if I deposit \$10 for tanomoshi, I gain 10 cents. That's, in other words, dividend or interest. If you bid 25 cents, you have to pay everyone 25 cents. So, that much going be less from your tanomoshi.

FK: Oh, so if you want the bulk, if you need it very badly, then you may bid higher and take a little loss.

YE: So, I remember, when they started to bid big, we found out the little trouble was that they take the tanomoshi and they disappeared. Of course, they get witness. Somebody have to be witness, but the witness hardly can pay up his own share. Just too bad. You cannot pay for somebody else, too.

FK: What do you mean, "disappear"? They moved away?

YE: Oh, they had all kind of problems, too. But the beginning, that was the only source of getting cash--by tanomoshi. Of course,

today, you have Finance Factors, credit union, American [Savings] and Loan, or something, something. You get all (kind) financial (services), but those days, nobody get money except. . . . Those who have little money, they could lend the money, and they could get compound interest. I feel sorry that I threw away one paper. My dad, way back, I think he must have really [had] difficulty. He borrowed money. He [made] a note--promissory note--paying 25 percent interest. So, they going to deduct the 25 percent interest. Before they lend out, they deduct that interest, and then they give you the balance. And then, you have to pay back in full. So, those people who had little money and [were] smart businessman, they make money out of money. So, tanomoshi was the main source of making (cash) money.

FK: How about the kumiai in Kona or your kumiai?

YE: Kumiai is, I think, mainly . . .

FK: What about the function and . . .

YE: Well, you don't see too much of kumiai [now], except during the misfortune. . . . People used to get together. But the olden times, early '20s, I remember, people used to work more harmoniously among neighbors and even friends. They get together. When you build the house, they all get together . . .

FK: All the kumiai . . .

YE: Kumiai used to help each other. Especially when you get little misfortune. Somebody get illness or something. Oh, they used to work really close. But, today, still, kumiai is existing. When get sort of some kind of misfortune, they usually get together and they help the. . . .

FK: Family?

YE: . . . family out. Function about the same thing, but they don't get closer like olden days, because they get their own cars, own telephones. The condition is different.

FK: Did the kumiais have meetings before?

YE: We used to have all kind of meetings.

FK: And how about dues?

YE: Dues is, anyway, depends on the kumiai. Even today, they run by dues, too. Just recently, I was told, they had get-together at Hongwanji. They had their annual meeting. Looks like they had family program. Reverend was telling me they use the Hongwanji hall. He was invited or he was called on, so he said he joined the gang and he said he sang Christmas carols. He said (chuckles) he

joined the group. So, they must have for the children, the kumiai function. But I think they may have their program chairman arrange some kind of program for Christmas, too, I think. Grab bags and all whatnot. So, they arrange the fees according to what they need.

FK: Which kumiai are you a member of?

YE: I still belong to that Chūō Kumiai--it's Kainaliu.

FK: Can people be in more than one kumiai?

YE: Oh, yes. I think so. It's up to the individual. But you have to associate [with] both, then. You obligated to two kumiai in case of misfortune or anything. See, I tell you, good history is where ours came from. Our kumiai is known as Central--Chūō, eh? Central Kumiai. When I first moved in that kumiai, the name was "Heiwa [peaceful; harmonious] Kumiai." Heiwa no hei and wa, eh? But our kumiai, I don't know, somehow, olden days, among the kumiai, they have all kind of misunderstandings and all kind of problems about the lease land and all kind of things. Oh, they had so many misunderstandings. The kumi people get together, try to negotiate or try to go in between and fix up things about the leasehold, about the neighbors. The two neighbors cannot get along, eh? They get all kind of quarrel. Then, they gather all the kumiai. For a while, probably wasn't too bad because they get together. That's the only source of getting together, but later on, they got disgusted. Get so often. So, they says the name "Heiwa" is too namakesuru [to be neglectful of one's duty]. You know, old superstitious things. So, they changed from Heiwa, peaceful. Supposed to be "peaceful kumiai." But they get so much fuss . . .

FK: So you changed to "Chūō"?

YE: . . . Chūō--Central. But they have plenty da kine Japanese kumiai, like Chūō Kumiai. They have one called "Wallace," because they got one prominent haole, one fella there, Wallace. But above Wallace, one Japanese man was really good in Japanese character [writing]. He was one of the ones who could read kanbun [Chinese writing], I was told. So, that area, he put the name "Mizuho." That old Jimmu Tenji [Tennō] era. And some put, like "Akitsu." I think they have some kind of meaning, too, the Akitsu. They have another one called "Tsuchiyemitsu," I think. Oh, you can read as "doboku," too, I think. But that must have some kind of meaning.

FK: Do you recall any big community or social events in the '30s?

YE: I don't recall too much, except this Japanese training ship, or renshū-sei or [ships of] that nature comes in. Because, those days, majority in Kona was Nihonjin.

FK: How about the debt adjustment? Can you talk about that?

YE: Debt adjustment is during around the depression years. About middle of '30s, I think. Because from around 1926 up to '26, '27, '28, '29, coffee prices was sort of boom. Especially, I think, the boom was '28.

FK: Then, it went down.

YE: Then, it started to decline. And it came down to rock bottom. During that time, I think, lots of these farmers have renovate their homes. That's one way of getting into big debt. Another way was that they bought the leasehold. They bought the lease, [pay] fabulous price, with the '28, maybe, quotation. And the coffee came down to about one-fourth of the price. Maybe '28 was about four dollars [a bag]. Came down to almost dollar. So, they pay fabulous price. They borrowed money from bank and elsewhere. They get a tremendous debt, plus they renovate the house, hoshidana or some fix up the living quarters, and they went in big debt.

Coffee was the only source of income for the farmers. Coffee was the only source. Vegetables wasn't too. . . . You know, one thing is, the transportation to Kailua, they have to ship out to Honolulu. Transportation very inconvenient. If you want to sell it locally, wasn't too successful, because nobody has money. The coffee price was so cheap. No other source of income. [Sugar] plantation were [closed] out. Oh, they were just stuck on their big debt. I don't know who have started, but I know distinctly, they got to ask for the. . . . Well, in the beginning, they have asked the merchants--the [American] Factors' merchants--stop computing interest on their debt. But they said, "Well, okay, but we have to. . . ." The main source of the loan money was American Factors. They take care mostly the whole Kona. The big company was American Factors.

FK: Captain Cook [Coffee Company, also]?

YE: Captain Cook. I think, the two were. And then, individual millers like Hawaii Coffee Mill and all this. The coffee mills themselves, if I'm not mistaken, we had over 40 stores in Kona, North and South. We had about seven or eight coffee brokers who buys the coffee from the farmers during the coffee season and they run their business. Quite a numbers of coffee brokers went broke because they bought the coffee at that time price. When they want to market the coffee, coffee starts to decline because overflooded. He couldn't sell his crop, but he have to pay the farmers. The farmers cannot receive from the brokers because the brokers says, no, they can't sell the coffee. So, that's how, oh, lots of people went in really rough time. Then, they started to talk about the debt adjustment. They want to find out how much debt.

FK: Who was this now?

YE: I don't know who supposed to be credit for that. I really don't know. I know I went out and helped do this paperwork and all this

detail work.

FK: Was it a club, or group, or. . . .

YE: Oh, the group. I think North had their own group. South had their own group. Central had their own group. But when come down to these big events, I think they all must get together and they started to work. Actually, I was too young, yet. I don't remember too well. But I know as a group, our area, I helped too. And as a group, I worked together. That's when we organized, I think, credit union too.

FK: What kind of information did you go out to get?

YE: Well, the first, number one, is that--I was told--we know that together, group, we have to hit the big ones. That's American Factors. Then, they have asked, "How much debt you folks get anyway?" So, individually, we have debt. The store get debt to American Factors. We get debt to Factors . . .

FK: And the stores. (Laughs)

YE: . . . and the stores. All (chuckles) over the place. So, I think, some people, they got the idea of trying to compile all that. That's why they started to do it, I'd say. That was, I don't know exactly what year, too. I don't quite remember that. But I know . . .

FK: Nineteen thirties, though?

YE: Uh huh [yes]. Around the mid-thirties, I'd say.

FK: So, you got this form, this paper, and then you went around?

YE: They passed to kumiai or to the. . . . I think, somebody take care in North Kona. And Central was Kyōwa-kai. And I know, at that time, Kyōwa-kai, I was vice-president, I think, if I'm not mistaken. Or one year, I was secretary-treasurer. So, I have all those transaction. I know, during the war, because of this, I was a secretary-treasurer or something. I have to pass around to Kyōwakai members, those who were inducted, we used to give this pin or flag or something. So, from any family, if any children have joined the army, they put the flag or some insignia on the house. So they know, from this house, how many have gone to serve the army. And then, Kyōwa-kai, I know I used to go pass around. Oh, and this kind of flag with--oh, yeah. That's right. About one foot square, I think, the flag. And each flag get one star for one member. If three in the family had gone to the army, we have three stars. So, you go to house and you see 'em on the door with the flag with one star. Means one son is inducted to army. I mean, he's in the armed service. So, that is '42. Until then, the Kyōwa-kai were functioning. But after the war, that thing break down.

FK: When you were going out to find information about the debts, what kind of questions did you ask the farmers?

YE: Oh, they made the special forms. I think was, I don't know . . .

FK: Some of the main questions were . . .

YE: Number one is your name, and then how many acres you have. The number one they want to find out, are you affiliated with what [coffee] company? Whom? Amount? And on the end, it says that remark--how many percent you be able to pay?

FK: You want to know the amount of debt, to whom the debt . . .

YE: They owe. And how much they'll be able to pay, and how long you'll be able to finish your debt. So, some of these questionnaires come back. For instance, in my case, I owe the Bank of Hawaii \$500; and to certain stores, so many hundred dollars; another store, \$300; and Doctor Hayashi, \$400; and Sugamura, so many hundred dollars. Total I get so many hundred dollars. But on the right side, they have on the questionnaire written, how many percent of this debt you be able to pay within the calendar year? Many came back, "Harau mikomi nashi," or, nothing that they be able to pay. And how long it takes to pay this debt--how soon you be able to pay? Some people wrote, "Oh, within ten years," "Within five years." Some says, "No prospect." But we have seen many of them--majority, I think--"No ways of paying. Even 1 percent a year, I cannot pay." So those are the questionnaires came back. So, we compile all that. We can add all the total. Only we hoping that they put up about the right figures. So, almost ran up to million dollars. I know it was a million dollars. Then, he'll bring that to American Factors. And then, he wrote a letter to American Factors, asking him. I know, Mr. [L.C.] Child [American Factors' manager] said, "You take direct with the Honolulu main office." (Really, those years--Kona was in that bad shape.)

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 9-29-3-80
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yosoto Egami (YE)

December 18, 1980

Onouli, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Faye Komagata (FK)

FK: This is an interview with Mr. Yosoto Egami of Kingsley or Onouli, South Kona. Today is December 18, 1980.

Mr. Egami, last time, we were talking about the debt adjustment. How were you involved with this, and can you remember some of the organizations that might have been involved?

YE: I think, those days, due to the transportations, they had various organizations. North [Kona] had their own farmers' organization called North Kona Jigyō-dan. And South Kona had their own.

FK: Called the. . . .

YE: Central had their own called, I think, it was Kyōwa-kai. And Captain Cook, the area, had one organization called--the Captain Cook tenants have organized it--called Kosaku Dōmei-kai. That's only the Captain Cook tenants.

FK: Oh, Captain Cook Coffee Mill, you mean?

YE: Yeah, Captain Cook Coffee Mill. Because Captain Cook has lots of coffee growers [who] have a sub-lease from Captain Cook. So, they were supposed to sell all their crops to nobody else but to Captain Cook.

FK: South Kona was the South Kona Jigyō-dan?

YE: Yes.

FK: Oh, okay. How about the other. . . .

YE: And then, around that time, I think Mr. [Earl] Nishimura, the county agent, have want this younger people to involve on this kind of thing. Not mainly for debt adjustment, but he have organized the youth organization called Kona Advancement Club. Consists of all the young people from North to South. So, at that time, I

don't know, maybe about 15 members, I think, if I'm not mistaken, from North to South. They called it Kona Advancement Club. This is just before the war [World War II], too, I think. Just about, maybe, 1938, I think, if I'm not mistaken. I don't recall exactly what year it was.

FK: Okay. . . . Do you remember some of the names of the people who may have been prominently involved in this?

YE: Yeah, mainly from the North side, usually. They used to have the same meeting in one--North and South, and representatives from the various sections. From the North, I know, several times I got together with Mr. Komo--Sotaro Komo. He's dead. And Ota--Isamu Ota. And Uchida. Let's see. . . . It's a long time ago, so I couldn't remember who they were, but I think. . . .

FK: From Kealakekua?

YE: Kealakekua, from Kosaku Dōmei-kai--like Mr. Kitaoka, Horiuchi, Oishi, and Nagai. And from the Central area, usually, Mr. Yamagata represented Central. And from the South side, Fujikawa--the elderly Fujikawas, and Tsukamoto. He was one of the key men--Tsukamoto. He works hard. From the merchants, way on the extreme south, was a Mr. Morihara. And from Captain Cook area, I think, from the merchants, Mr. Takahata. I remember, he used to come.

FK: What role did the [agricultural] extension service agents play?

YE: Well, extension service, number one, whenever they have all kinds of meeting, usually, they hold at the extension office. At that time, if I'm not mistaken, was Manago [Hotel]. During that time, I think, the extension office was located at Manago. Usually, these farmers, when they get together, the transportation was not convenient like these days. So, usually, they come in the morning, they have lunch at Manago's, and even supper. And sometimes, they stay up till midnight. (Chuckles) So . . .

FK: For meeting?

YE: For the meeting. Kind of long meeting.

FK: What sort of things were discussed?

YE: Oh, they were discussing about, number one, I think, to get some kind of credit. Of course, they were getting some credit from stores, but wasn't sufficient because they were just limited to small amount. I remember, those days, they had so much debt already that [at the] end of the fiscal year, they hardly could pay up their interest on their debt. So, they have been trying to get some adjustment on interest, and all sort of things.

FK: This was discussed in the meeting?

YE: During the meeting. Main thing was, get some kind of finance (somewhere).

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

FK: Who took a census for the Japanese Council?

YE: I think, in the South, Mr. Tamajiro Marumoto. He was a merchant. He was more sort of affiliated with the council. He used to organize, make the team. He asked somebody in the North, and some in Central, and in the South. Of course, all the forms, looks like, been sent to his place, and he used to distribute to the various teams. Around our area, in Captain Cook, he asked me to help him. Usually, we used to gather all these people at the hall. I mean, when I say "hall," they have kinenkan. We had kinenkan just above Fujino Store. But sometimes, many of these people (absent) that day. So, whatever is left out, he asked me. And we used to get the team, like myself, Kitaoka, and Taka . . .

FK: Takahata?

YE: Takahata, and Oishi. We used to go around--whoever missing--we used to go around and get the information.

FK: Going into World War II, you were already working at the experimental station, right? We'll talk about that later, but could you describe life in Kona during World War II? How did it affect your family or your work?

YE: Well, not bad on my work. But gasoline--of course, the main thing was, gasoline was rationed. Everything was rationed. But mainly, [for] these alien peoples was the difficulty of passing the boundaries. What I meant "boundaries," Kona was divided into two sections--North and South. The district boundaries, North and South, was just about [where] the hospital--county hospital is today, Ushiroda's service station. Whoever lived on the South [and] want to go to the North, you have to get a special permit to pass through that boundary. To get the permit, you have to go down to the headquarters. The headquarters used to be located at the old county hospital, about [where] the Bank of Hawaii building [is] now. Those who lived in North bypassed the boundary, go up to the police station for their headquarters, and then get their permit. That was the most difficult things.

Many things was rationed that you cannot buy the thing that you want, especially the staple food like rice, flour, and things of that nature. And then, to buy liquor, I think, if I'm not mistaken, only citizens were allowed to buy. I'm not too sure. But to buy liquor, you have to get special permit.

FK: How about church?

YE: Well, church, the main thing, the reverend was interned, sort of

interned. Nobody at the church. Number one, they had the posters stuck around all over the place and says, "Don't speak Japanese." The aliens, the enemy aliens or Japanese, cannot gather in any area at one time, (less) than ten, I think. So, any sort of gathering, more than ten, they have to make sure they go up to the headquarters and get their permit.

FK: How about funerals?

YE: Funerals, in case of that, I think, they had a special permit. Because I have an experience. My dad passed away September, 1942-- in month of September. It was crucial time. But a friend of mine got a permit for us, but "Try not to gather more than ten people at a time." They come over and visit us, then just they go home, so. . . . Just about the family get together. So, it was a rough time. And no food, too. Money cannot buy food because everything was rationed.

FK: Can you describe your work with macadamia nuts? You mentioned the length of time that was involved in this experimental station.

YE: Yeah, around that time, during the war, we already had . . .

FK: You can start from the beginning.

YE: We had quite a numbers of macadamias. That is, I think, University have started macadamia--way back about--in Kona, I think--they have started somewhere around 1934 or maybe, perhaps, little earlier. But about 1936, and '37, '38, they have grafted quite a numbers of selected varieties. When I meant "selected" is that all your macadamia growing in Kona at that time was all from seed. And macadamia is one thing never comes true from seed. But many of these macadamia selected, of course, first were grown by seed. But one out of thousand, maybe, so many thousands, some good quality comes out. But most cases, when you plant this good macadamia nut, inferior quality comes out--thick shell, poor bearers, or some kind of defects.

So, all these macadamias, what University have done is they pick up macadamia from each tree, and crack the nut, and anything we feel that the shell is thin and the kernel is nice color in kernel, they used to mark the tree--number the trees or get some kind of tag on the tree. And all the samples were sent down to University for analyze. Any that comes back from University worth selecting as worth propagate, they used to give us a number and a special tag. And all these trees, we take the branches from these trees, and they have grafted at the experiment station. After about two years, all these (grafted) trees were sent out or given out to whoever wants to try.

FK: Locally?

YE: Locally. But those days, not too many people took interest on planting macadamia. Of course, the coffee was still cheap, but they didn't know too much about macadamia. So, big planting was done mostly in the plantation, like Kohala. You mentioned about the difficulty in my work in the wartime. Only difficulty was the transportation to go to Kohala. When the war broke out, we had quite a number of trees already. At that time, we have quite a number of trees.

FK: How were they planted? How did you provide quite a number?

YE: Oh, they planting varieties. So, what, mainly, the University wanted is, when they want to make a trial of how that thing work and what variety do the best. So, around 1942, we already have some trees bearing already. Few started to bear. So, I used to make a trip to Kohala at least once a month. And gathered all the macadamia when harvest, and take the measurement or growth measurement. In other words, what variety grows the fastest.

FK: What happened in Kohala? Who took care of it?

YE: Bond, I think--Kenneth Bond. He was employed, I think, at plantation. He had a large property at Kapaa [Hawaii]. But, actually, that place is called Iole, I think. He had several hundred acres. But he had quite a big planting over there.

FK: So, like how many plants would you take at one time?

YE: At one area, I think, he had about--that is, his own--he had about five acres planted. And he had his own seedling planted, about half acre, too. For our experimental purposes, I think, about five acres. I don't know exactly about how many varieties, but around that time, we already had about 20 or 30 good varieties.

FK: So, you took that many varieties over?

YE: Yeah, that was planted way long before. I think I was sent out about 1937 and '38.

FK: You were explaining how they were planted at one time . . .

YE: Oh, yeah. Usually, they plant about three plants of same varieties in random. If you get 10 varieties or 15 varieties at one time, I think, you planted three plants of one variety, and put three of another one, and another three on random. One area had at least three replication. So, three, three. In other words, three times, three is nine trees to one variety.

FK: And then, you compare later?

YE: Yeah, and then compile all that later. Because certain area, maybe, the tree does have more sunlight. Certain [amount] is bad.

So, by that, in random, you have each variety on different place.

FK: How was your driving back and forth to Kohala? What did you encounter? Any problems?

YE: In the beginning, it's little different from now. Boss and myself, we got up, sometimes, about half past four [4:30], and we used to leave home about 5 o'clock in the morning and come back almost sunset. Later on, when we started to take the year record during the war, we used to make just limited trips. Probably leave about 6 o'clock in the morning and try and get back before 4 or 5 o'clock.

FK: Who was your supervisor or your boss?

YE: That time, was Robert Pahau. He was my immediate boss.

FK: Who were some of the other people working with you?

YE: In the beginning, when I start work, Torao Ikeda was working. Morimoto Shigeji, Monden Tadashi, Sugai Susumu and Ohata. Ohata Susumu. And Ito Yoshio. We had several employees, that time.

FK: What happened to all the other trees that you had at the experimental station planted?

YE: Oh, that time, we still had lots of grafted trees. So, we gave away quite a numbers to local people, 10, 20 trees.

FK: They came to pick it up or you delivered?

YE: No, no. They pick up--they come over and dig, themselves. Of course, we do help, but they dig, themselves, and plant their own. But we have several farmers in Kona we help them plant as a collaborator. What we want, mainly, is the year data.

FK: Is there any special technique involved, like with fertilizing or . . .

YE: I won't say exactly a technique, but you all knows that macadamia is one tree that's easy to fall. It doesn't have too much good root--develop too good root--the tap root. Especially the tap root. So, we used to plant it deep, deep enough so it won't fall. Other than that, how to train the trees. Like, easy to split. So, later on, I think, around 1946, Mr. [Edward] Fukunaga came over. He takes lots of interest, and he soon got lot of the technique of pruning macadamia, fertilizing, and all of those details. What we experiment at the station, he used to go out to the field and helped how to prune, and fertilize, and things of that nature.

FK: Why did the University continue such a long-range program like this?

YE: In the first place, coffee [prices] was bad. They thought, probably, this would supplement the income for the coffee farmers, and that, probably, this would be a good industry, next industry, for Kona. Of course, they didn't know was this good. But Dr. [John] Beaumont, he was in charge of the macadamia. He took a keen interest of macadamia. He tried to spread out this macadamia all over the state. The other districts had stronger wind than we do. Macadamia trees, one thing, macadamia is easier to fall. I mean, it doesn't develop too good tap roots, so. But still then, quite a numbers were planted in other districts, especially. From that time, we knew Kona was ideal for macadamia because we don't have strong winds like other districts.

FK: You mentioned that in 1945 you purchased two and a quarter [2-1/4] acres. Why did you do this?

YE: Well, the land that I was living was lease land. Landlord always gave us, when the lease expires, ten years at a time. The landlord himself was saying that until he lives, it's okay, he will give me a lease. But when he died, naturally, he's going to turn over to his children. And probably, the children won't give you a lease. He was advising us to try to get our own land. Your own because you get place to stay. I had the opportunity to buy this in 1945.

FK: Where?

YE: Over here. Where I'm staying now.

FK: What happened to the coffee land in Honaunau?

YE: Well, I had a chance to purchase that property, too, in Honaunau. And after I bought that, I have sold that property. Because I had a chance to buy three acres additional adjoining to my property where I'm staying. So, I sold Honaunau and I picked up the one adjoining to my property.

FK: Who did you purchase the land from? Here?

YE: This one, I got from Mr. Ushiroda. He had this land.

FK: I see. And your adjoining property?

YE: Was Mr. Texeira. I think, his wife got through his father.

FK: Can you think of any natural or man-caused events that may have affected coffee farming here in the past? Such as, causing up and down or . . .

YE: You mean, the prices or . . .

FK: Of yield, or whatever.

YE: Coffee is one of the easiest things to culture, as long as you fertilize and you prune. But the weather has lots to do to give a good yield. If you have a long drought during the autumn months, maybe somewhere around October, November and December, usually, the following year, you have a better crop. Not only better crop, but you have uniform crops.

FK: Do you recall anything that might have affected that in a bad way?

YE: Rain, I'd say. Too much rain during the autumn months, winter months.

FK: Has that happened to you?

YE: Oh, yes. I think, way back, one thing was when my dad was at Captain Cook, way back, early 1920. That time, the main reason why the production came low is maybe due to fertilizer. Those days, they didn't have any idea of fertilizing. And the weather has lots to do. Probably they have poor fertilization, and they have continuous rain all through the year.

FK: While you were working at the experiment station and all, what was your wife doing and the rest of your family?

YE: Well, my wife, more sort of housewife, and she maintains this coffee while I'm gone.

FK: What are your feelings about coffee and macadamia nuts or any other agricultural process in Kona?

YE: Hereafter? I think Kona would be most ideal for macadamia. There's no wind. Of course, we might have wind, but maybe once in every 10 or 20 years, so Kona is the most ideal place for macadamia and lots of prospect.

FK: But . . .

YE: But no land. No land available.

FK: People talk of the young people leaving.

YE: I think--maybe I'm wrong--but someday, these people will come back to Kona.

FK: Do you think so?

YE: Yeah. They will come back. Even now, quite a number is thinking of coming back, and I see quite a number have returned already to Kona. They get homesick, I think. (Chuckles) (And best place to retire.)

FK: I had forgotten this, but what was your involvement with the credit

union in its beginning foundation?

YE: See, when we organized the credit union, I was one of the charter members. We have to set the officers.

FK: This is 1936?

YE: I think was 1936, if I'm not mistaken. We were one of the first officers during that time, too. I was with the supervisory committee. After these new people came in, then they took over.

FK: What was involved in the very beginning?

YE: Number one, biggest job involve us was to increase the membership. To get the members is the biggest job. We got the members all right. Entrance fee was 25 cents and they'd deposit one dollar. That's about the only thing they could do for quite a long time. So, we couldn't increase any capital.

Then, long after, when Julian Yates came in, he said, "Why don't [you] get everybody involved in this credit union?" It was named like Kona Farmers Federal Credit Union.

FK: That was the original?

YE: Original name.

FK: So, he says, "Why don't we make it community credit union?" So, we think that's a good idea, so we have turned the name into Kona Community Credit Union. That means all the people in Kona, regardless of farmers or not--schoolteachers, merchants, road workers, industrial workers. . . . Of course, those days, no industrial work, but they have quite a numbers of county jobs and road jobs. So, those people can join the credit union to build up the capital.

FK: And the capital increased from this?

YE: Oh, yeah. The membership increases and the capital increased. We have started the book from number 1, and now book number exceeds 4,000-something, if I'm not mistaken.

FK: What is your number?

YE: Number 3. (Chuckles)

FK: What do you think about the impact of the credit union in Kona?

YE: Well, I think it's great. Quite a number taking advantage of this credit union.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

YE: I think credit union do a good service to the people of Kona. Of course, today, we have all kind of financial aid--Finance Factors, American Savings, Federals and Pioneers, and all sort of financial aid. But the credit union is one place where it's our own money and we use it to help out each other. Even now, let's say, the employees now, we have quite a numbers of employees now.

FK: In the beginning. . . .

YE: Oh, in the beginning, we only had two, I think, to start with. Mainly we had only one in the beginning. One treasurer, that's about the only thing. And the treasurer was sort of part-time, too.

FK: What was his name?

YE: Oh, Mr. Akamatsu. He was the first treasurer. And Mr. Hirata, I think, was the president of it. So, he's been on the team--ever since this credit union was organized.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

FK: Do you feel that many farmers have taken advantages of the loans?

YE: Not only farmers. The people in Kona have took lots of advantage. Especially way back. All my children have borrowed money from credit union to go to school. And quite a numbers, way back. The other day, I met a friend of mine, talking about credit union. He says, "If wasn't for the credit union, I won't be able to start my business." Not only that, but he say all his children also had aid from credit union. Those days, way back, we had a difficult time of borrowing money. Of course, credit union, doesn't mean that you can borrow all what you want, but that was one of the easiest source of getting money.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

FK: We kind of missed the Japanese schools, too. Could you explain what you recall of the situation with the Japanese schools?

YE: You mean, after the war?

FK: Before the war, we were talking about how it moved from one place to the other?

YE: Oh, I see. When I first enrolled in school, way back about 1916, I remember, had two Japanese schools. One in Hongwanji and another Japanese school nearby. Dokuritsu Gakkō, I think. Independent Japanese School, I think, if you interpret it. I don't know why, but they had two Japanese schools. Later on, when I was in about

fourth grade, I think, the two schools--the Hongwanji and the other school--have merged into one. And not long after, again, couple years after that, if I'm not mistaken, they have separated again. (Chuckles) They have two Japanese schools, now. Once they merged, and they separated. One school, the parents get together and built the Japanese school where Mr. Henry Greenwell's residence is located. The other half, these Japanese, have borrowed the public school [on] land adjoining to the public school, I think, they have built one school cottage. I'm not too familiar with that . . .

FK: Oh, Konawaena?

YE: Konawaena. And that time, I think, Mr. Okubo and Mr. Sugimoto were involved. They were the teachers. Later, Reverend Nakayama was the principal, I remember that. The other school, by Mr. Henry Greenwell's residence, I don't know how many thousand dollars they have spent--tremendous money to build the school. Mr. Tanabe Sonojo, he was the principal. And Mr. Okinaga, and they have several (lady) teachers, too, I recall. Nakahara, I think--Miss Nakaharas--two sisters. Several times, the faculty have changed. Somehow, these Japanese--I don't know about other districts, but they can't get along.

(Laughter)

YE: So, I distinctly remember, after I left school, the coffee came depression. The main income from the farm--not only farm, but for Kona--income was only coffee. Coffee was the main industry. After the coffee price declined to rock bottom, all this tuition became delinquent. I remember, one time, they hardly had enough (cost) to pay the teachers. Just before the war, if I'm not mistaken, I was asked to be one of the appointed--what do you call, the board. . . . They give a title of big name, because so we can help them in the Japanese school board and try to somehow gather the tuition. So, that's why I knew how much delinquent total. Oh, it was big amount. And I don't blame, too. Those days, coffee price was so cheap. One family--biggest family--I think, they had about ten children or six, seven children attending Japanese school from same family. And even dollar a head, that's six dollars a month. Those days, six dollars in cash, that was a big money.

So, especially, Mr. Tanabe's school. The parents get together and they organize a team (on weekends). All the children goes down onto the coffee farm and pick up the coffee cherries. During the coffee season, lots of coffee beans falls on the ground. They used to pick up that coffee, and they used to sell it to make some money (for school). Even one time, they organized and raised vegetables, and they make sort of a flea market--like now, you can see--but this mainly vegetables, though. They used to put up a market and sell these vegetables and try to get some income for the school. It was bad.

FK: How about the building?

YE: Now, building, during the war, nobody taking care. This happen to be Mr. Tanabe's school. That's where Mr. Henry Greenwell [resides]. Must have been a lease property. Nobody make an effort to pay the rental because the school was not in use. So, the landlord took away the building. In other words, they lost everything.

FK: What are your feelings about having been a coffee farmer? I know you're doing other farming, too, being a farmer.

YE: Those days, coffee farming was not a profitable occupation, because the more you increase your area, the deeper debt you're going in because the coffee price was so cheap. Today, the price is so good, no comparison. I think, now, the last two years or even this year, 1980, I was told, some of these coffee millers paying two dollars a pound on parchment. Way back, when I recall, the cheapest was four cents a pound. That's on the '30s. Same coffee, four cents a pound, and now, two dollars a pound.

So, if come to prices, it's a profitable business, but the coffee takes too much labor. Well, very few really wants to come out and pick coffee in the sun. Because most people prefer to work in a hotel, in a house. The labor---harvesting is the biggest item on the job for coffee culture. Coffee is the easiest to raise, and yet, take too much labor. So, I don't know too much, but Kona is the most ideal place in the state.

FK: What are you farming mostly now?

YE: Macadamia. I mean, I have few coffee. On the borderline, so I still have few coffee trees. But the macadamia probably will be the ideal thing, I think. Because with macadamia, you wait till the thing falls on the ground and you pick up. But coffee, once coffee falls on the ground, you lose almost everything.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

FK: Mr. Egami, is there anything further you would like to add in closing?

YE: As of now, I don't have anything that I would like to add. But I could. . . . You've been asking about the children, whether they come back to Kona or not. I don't think all the children will come back, but I know for retirement, from my standpoint, from my experience, Kona would be the most ideal place to retire. My two children in the Mainland, they says not to sell the property; they'll like to come back after they retired. Some day, I think, we going to hit depression. When things get bad, I think there's quite a number will come back to Kona.

FK: Because you have a. . . .

YE: Have a house to stay, a place to stay. And the climate is so good.

FK: And they have a farm.

YE: And they have a small farm.

FK: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Egami.

END OF INTERVIEW

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KONA

Volume I

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